

MICRO ACTION

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AMTIX! CPC

THE GREATEST CPC MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD!

ALL THE LATEST CPC
GAMES REVIEWED!

KEEPING UP WITH THE
JONESES - WE TAKE A
LOOK BACK AT INDY'S CPC
ADVENTURES.

JOYSTICKS PART DEUX! -
COLIN BELL BRINGS YOU
ANOTHER SELECTION OF
CLASSIC STICKS!

GAME COVER CRACKERS - 1985
COMPILATION CORNER
AMTIXCPC ADVENTURE TAVERN
LATEST PREVIEWS

AM-TECH

ZOË KIRK-ROBINSON LOOKS AT THE
RISE & FALL OF THE CPC+ RANGE

AMSTRAD ART

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AMTIX! **CPC**

MICRO ACTION

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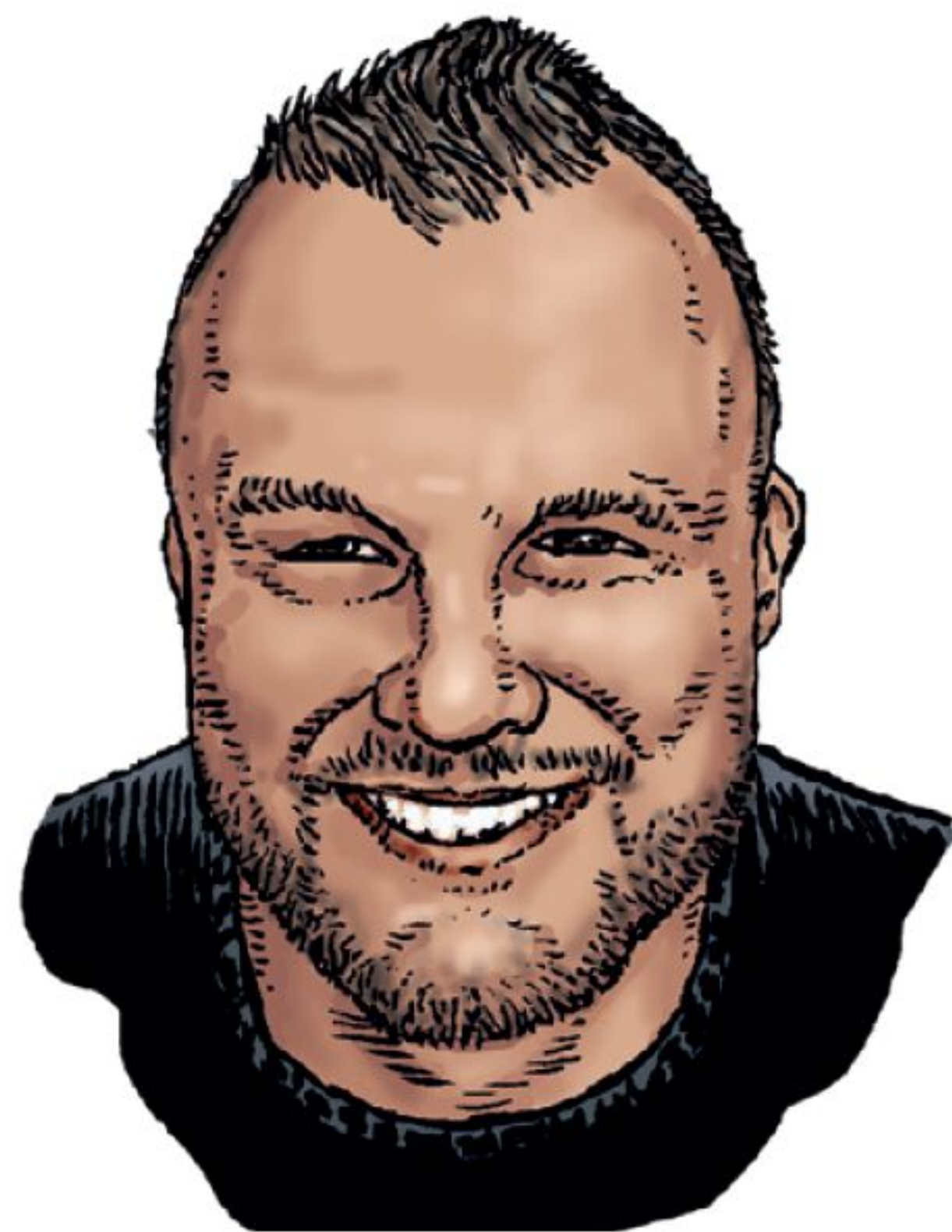
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FUSION RETRO BOOKS

AMTIX!

CPC



Ready

Welcome, one and all, to Issue #9 of AMTIXCPC Micro Action, the only magazine that brings you the very best in reviews and features dedicated to the Amstrad CPC. I can't believe it's been a whole quarter already, but what another great few months it has been for the CPC!

To kick things off, we look at the much anticipated new game from ESP Soft, *Gates of Heaven*, as well as a number of fun new puzzle titles, and an adorable little platformer featuring *Jax the Dog*.

As well as our usual reviews, the AMTIXCPC team have been busy this month, with Chris aka Novabug taking a look at the jaw-dropping new game footage from Sonic GX. He'll be bringing you all the latest on this much-anticipated project in this issue's previews section.

With this summer seeing the return of the infamous 'Man in the Hat', I reminisce about the Indiana Jones games that graced our CPC screens during the late 80s and early 90s. I'm also bringing you another Joystick Guide, taking a look at another fine selection of sticks that were popular back in the day.

Some exciting news regarding a new text adventure can be found over at the Adventure Tavern, as well as a look at Altanerus Dog's first foray into the world of adventure games with *Dekay*.

Our resident historian Paul Davies is again on hand, looking back at the original Issue #9 of the original AMTIX magazine, while cover connoisseur Graeme Mason returns with several more game cover crackers, this time from the year 1985.

Finally, in AM-TECH, Zoë tells the story of the rise and fall of the CPC+ range.

Rare find

As a collector, you're always on the look out for a rare title. For me, that means titles that were early releases for the CPC by small, independent software houses that perhaps only ever released a handful of games.

Nowadays, these rarities tend to be mainly found online at some exorbitant price, although not always. Even better, though, is when you stumble across a rare find that

you never expected. And that's what happened to me the other week while out on a Lego hunt with my son. The hunt for large mythical Lego beasts was based in Paisley and took us across the town centre, the idea, of course, being that you go into the local shops and spend some pennies. One such stop along the way was a small antiques shop which immediately piqued my interest with its Paul Daniels 'Every Second Counts' board game in the window. Inside, there was all sorts, from vinyl to toys and old tech which I love. My son was straight into the large wicker basket full of old Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars, allowing me to peruse the shelves where I came across a small box of cassettes. Immediately I recognised the Amstrad Action tapes, the gazillionth copy of *Animal, Mineral, Vegetable*, and then another cassette, something I hadn't seen before - *Cred Breaks Out*.

Turns out this game was released in association with TSB Bank in 1986 and is the only title from the Magic Micro Club. Also released for the C64, the Speccy, and BBC, the CPC version is incredibly scarce, so as you can imagine, I was very excited with my find. I've still to play it, and once I have, I'll bring you a flash back review. Have you ever come across a CPC rarity? If so, let us know!

Ready?



RUN™ A-TEAM .BAS

COLIN BELL

Has been a massive fan of the CPC ever since his dear old Mum bought Dad one for Christmas in 1986 to use for his electrical business – that never happened! He has fond early memories of playing *The Custard Pie Factory*, *Super Gran* and *Rig Attack!* and has a passion for



adventure games. A serious collector of all things Amstrad, he currently has over a whopping 2,300 games in his collection along with various CPC systems and hardware. Colin also writes for other publications under the Fusion Retro Books banner and is very honoured to be taking on the role of editor for AMTIXCPC.

GORDON KING

Or Kingy as he is known in the retro community is one of the hosts of RGDS Podcast. He's one of those strange creatures that love all of the 8-bit home micros and won't get involved in a 'which is better' debate. He is no stranger to the Fusion Retro Magazine house and currently



writes reviews and some articles on CRASH. His personally owned Amstrad is the 6128, and by the time you've read this, he's modified it with a Gotek drive. No Amstrads were hurt during this daring mission.

ZOE KIRK-ROBINSON

Is a talented artist and comedian who makes games for old computers live on YouTube. Zoë got her first Amstrad when she was four, a decision her parents almost instantly regretted. She didn't stop playing on her CPC until the age of forty, and even then, only stopped to write



something for this magazine. Zoë also produces CPCine, a YouTube documentary series that charts the life of the Amstrad CPC and she very kindly provided the artwork for all the lovely faces you see here. She lives in Bolton, in a cocoon made from retro games.

CHRIS WEATHERLEY, AKA 'NOVABUG'

is a retro gaming YouTuber and writer contributing to various websites such as The Pixel Empire, RetroUnlim and Indie Retro News. A self-confessed CPC fanatic, 'Novabug' is well known for his Saturday live streams where he tests real CPC cassette games on real hardware,



to much amusement and sometimes disappointment. He is also the product of a hybrid breeding project, to splice a human and an alien to create the ultimate Amstrad guardian. Funded by Lord Sugar, the project wasn't a success.

BEN HONEBONE

Spent the late 1980s and early 90s huddled around a green screen playing *Arkanoïd*, *Wizball*, and other colour dependent games on the CPC 464. From this self imposed isolation there emerged a lifelong Amstrad enthusiast and video game connoisseur. Ben can



also be found working at Fusion magazine, making music with bands and as a solo artist, making music videos and content, and generally roaming around the Welsh countryside looking for fighting game players.

SEAN McMANUS

Got an Amstrad for Christmas 1984 and wrote his first Amstrad program that same day. Sean contributed type-ins to Amstrad Action (AA) and Amstrad Computer User (ACU), and wrote the Sprite Definer that appeared on AA's cover tape. He wrote a couple of



tutorials for ACU too, and a BASIC programming book called The Basic Idea. Today Sean works as a technology copywriter and writes books about programming in Python and Scratch to inspire the next generation. Visit Sean's website at www.sean.co.uk to read his Amstrad book and play his games.

GRAEME MASON

A video games fan from a very early age, Graeme Mason grew up in the arcades of the late Seventies before embracing the home computer boom of the Eighties. Today, Graeme writes about retro games for Retro Gamer, Eurogamer and more, and while a Speccy



fan at heart, he will always have a special place for Amstrad CPC. The colourful graphics and incredible sound of games such as *Sorcery+*, *Tau Ceti* and *Commando* represent some of his finest memories of the iconic computer

GATES 2 HEAVEN

Author: **ESP Soft**
Released: **2023**

Review by Zoë Kirk-Robinson

ESP Soft are back and they're here to make you cry. It's clear you've been very naughty of late, finishing all their amazing games with such fervour, and they've decided you need to be punished. So they've produced a game that combines time limits, pixel-perfect jumping, and the need for absolute down-to-the-split-second jump timing for every single enemy in the game.

You are Ruperto González, a bald dude with a massive head, and you saved the world once, so you've been called upon to do it again. "Microchoft" (subtlety is not one of Gates 2 Heaven's strong points) was absorbed into Amsoft+, but some people didn't like that. Now, those people are trying to prevent Amsoft+ from launching AMSDOS+. You have to battle your way through four mazes of monsters modelled after pop culture icons to find the cassettes, disks, and cartridges that AMSDOS+ is stored on, and load them into Amstrad computers so it can be released to the world.

Can you tell this is a parody story?

The game is set over four levels of the most aggravating design possible. There isn't an enemy in this game that you can breeze past; every single one



Above & Below: Hey, don't I know you guys from somewhere? Just some of the many pop culture enemies you'll come across in Gates.



Zoë



CRITICISM

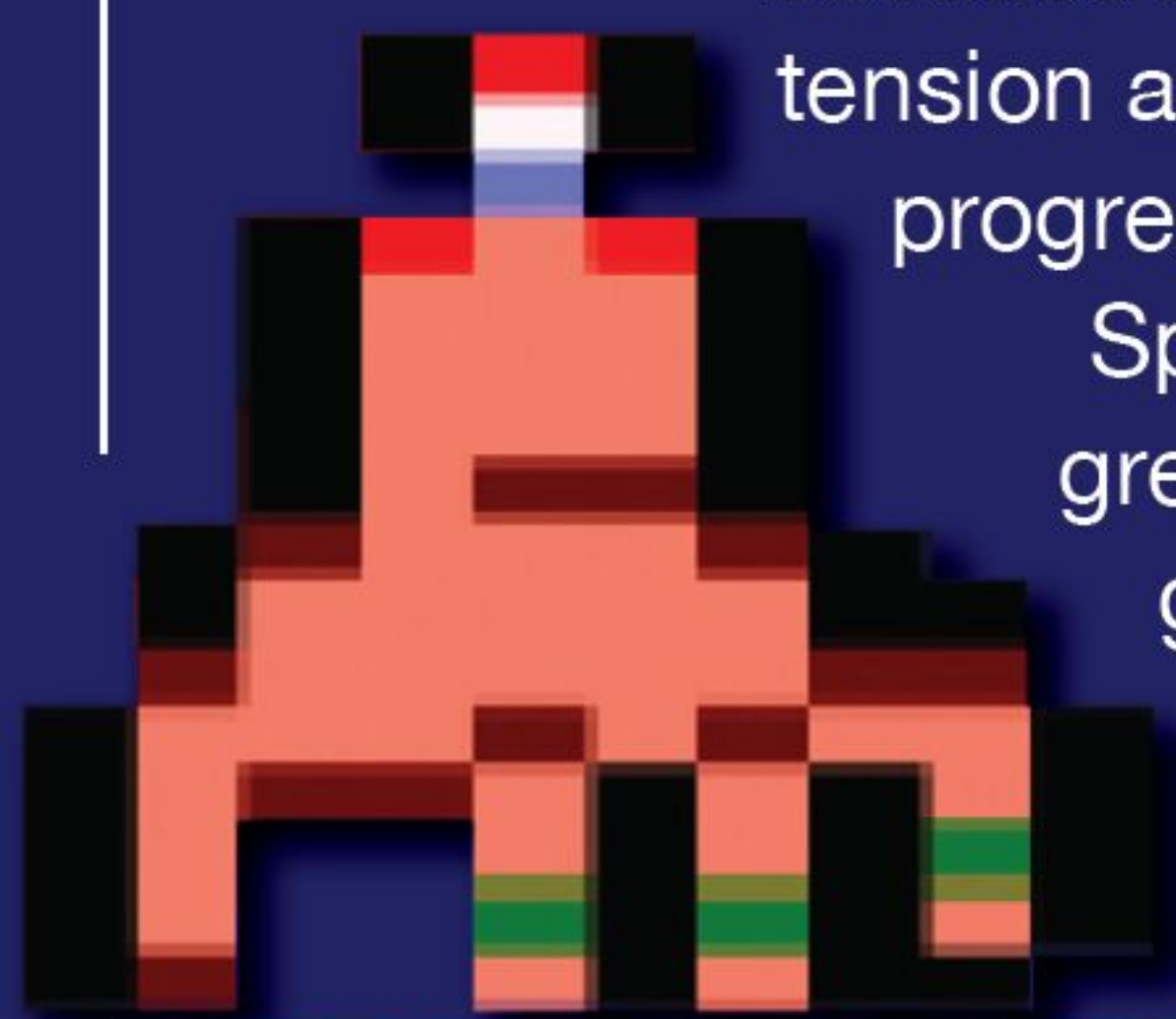
It pains me to say I don't like this game. I want to love it - I adore other ESP Soft titles, and I thought I'd love this one, too. The problem is, it's too frustrating. There's a gem of a great game in here, but every single enemy is placed in just the right spot to be infuriating to get past. Combine this with a time limit that seems generous at first but really isn't, and you're in for an evening of pain when you play this game.

I like a game that's challenging. There's no fun in breezing through something on your first try. This isn't a challenge: it feels like a punishment, and I'd like to know what I'm supposed to have done wrong because I'm not sure I deserve it.

requires perfect timing and pixel-precise positioning to get around. Thankfully, you have ten lives per game.

On each level, you need to find a cassette/disk/cartridge, grab coins, and reach the computer. There will be a switch to power the computer, but there's a virus that will load if you don't reach the computer in time, adding a timer to proceedings. This is a great idea, because it increases the tension as each level progresses.

Speaking of greatness, the graphics are fantastic. Every single



Gordon



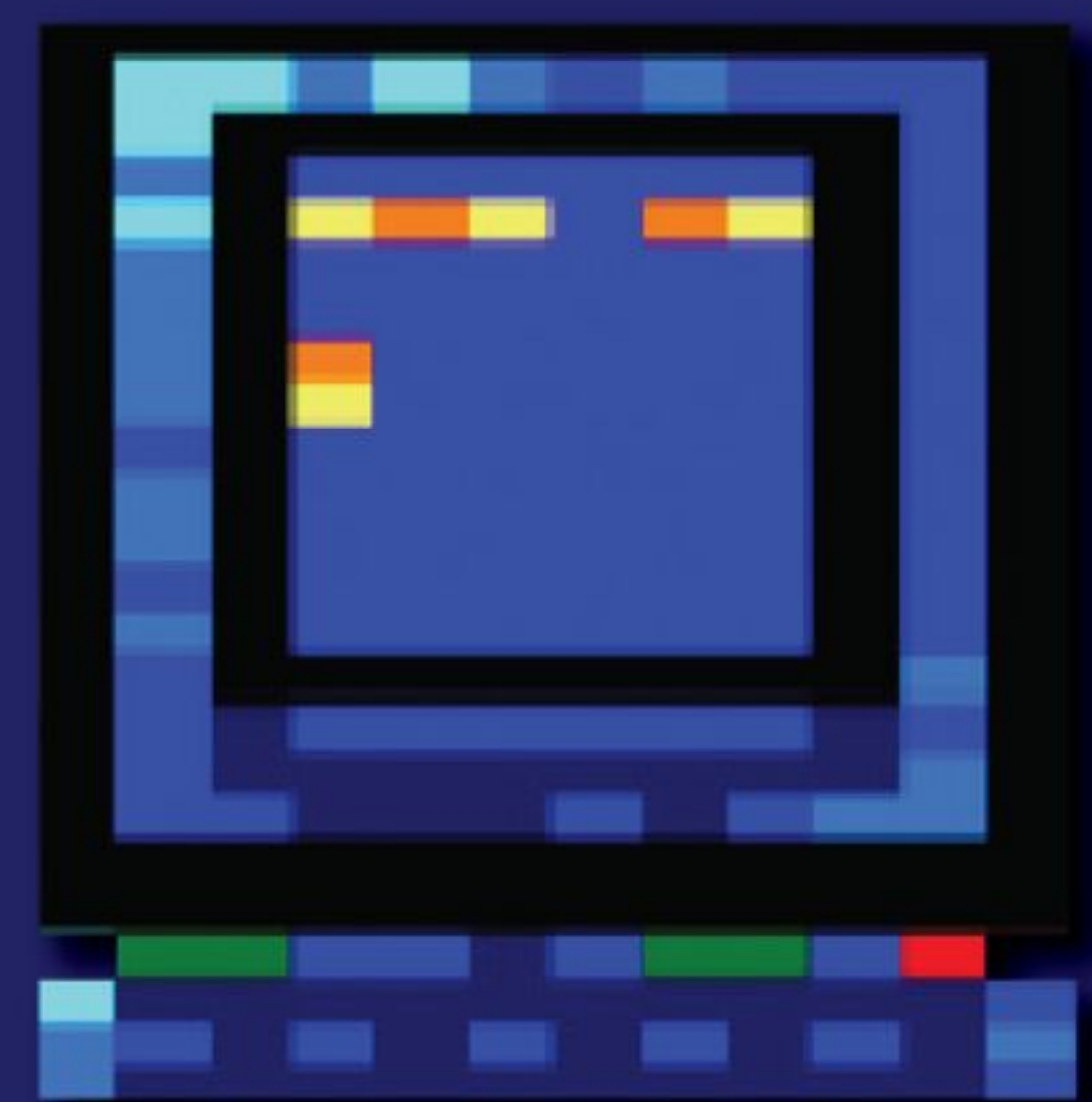
CRITICISM

Wow, this platformer is superb, boasting clever nods to geek culture across its three levels. The way it pays homage to various icons is simply outstanding. The sprite designs are particularly praiseworthy, capturing the essence of each character brilliantly. It's great fun identifying the sources the game has drawn inspiration from. Without giving away too much, you'll find references ranging from The Addams Family and Robocop to Mario and Marvel, creating a paradise for geeks. Even the in-game music contributes to the charm, incorporating recognisable melodies from popular games, shows, and movies. The responsiveness of the main character's controls adds to the overall gameplay experience. As you play more, you begin to really admire the creativity and dedication that went into making the game. This title perfectly showcases how to create an exceptional platformer for the CPC. Undoubtedly, this is a top-tier game, and its price tag of £1.00 on itch.io feels like a steal. Don't hesitate - purchase and immerse yourself in this gem today.



pop culture icon is easily identified and beautifully animated. The soundtrack is wonderful (although the Harry Potter leitmotif is jarring because the other references are all much older, so it stands out), and the controls are smooth. This is so close to being a classic.

Sadly, it's the need for split-second timing plus pixel-perfect jumping together that ruins it. Having one or the other is fine - who doesn't like a challenge? But using them together and adding a time limit lurches into unfairness territory. What could have been an excellent new game and a firm favourite ends up an exercise in frustration.



PRESENTATION 95%

This game is so polished it has an outer layer of Mr. Sheen.

GRAPHICS 95%

Bright, well drawn, and smoothly animated.

SOUND 90%

Great music, only let down by sound effects being too low.

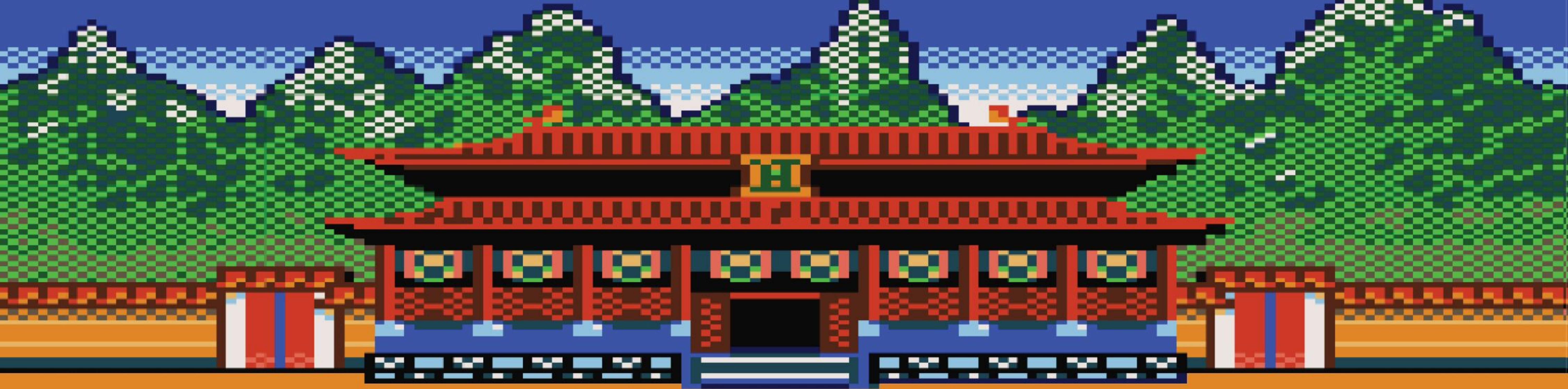
ADDICTIVENESS 70%

The frustration factor kicks in quick and hurts the game.

LASTABILITY 70%

After just a few tries, you'll know if this is for you or not.

**OVERALL
84%**



Author: **GGP**
Released: **2023**

Yie Ar Kung-Fu Turbo is an update on the already brilliant CPC arcade port by Imagine Software. As well as featuring faster gameplay, hence the word 'Turbo' in the title, it has an improved CPC+ colour palette, joy-pad controls, and an Invulnerability mode if you wish to utilise it. And it doesn't stop there either, as there's also the new loading screen which you can see at the top of

this page, and not one but four rebuilt backgrounds: two from the original game featuring the temple and waterfall, and two new



Above: High kicking action! just one of the many moves at your disposal.

ones that pay homage to *Street Fighter II* and *Double Dragon*. 'Why is this?',



you may ask. Well, it's because the original *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* arcade game from Konami is oft-regarded as having established the basis for modern fighters such as the aforementioned two.

So, what's it like? Well, as with the original game, *Turbo* has been produced to a high standard. It features all 16 moves which, at high speed, take a good while to get to grips with. This is where the joy-pad controls become a welcome addition and make fighting far easier than it ever was





Above: Tribute to Street Fighter II backdrop.

trying to use keys. All the original opponents return as well for nine stages

Colin



It's true, Yie Ar Kung-Fu Turbo improves on the original. But! It's almost too fast at times, and before you even know what's happening, you're on the ground minus one life. Even blocking, I feel, doesn't always do much to help your situation. Still, I do like the colour palette, updated backdrops, and fluid animations. If you're a beat-em up fan, you'll love this. Otherwise it's invulnerability mode all the way.

CRITICISM



of Kung-Fu fighting action, some of which tend to be more

Gordon



AMTIXCPC always applauds more releases for the GX4000, and what a way to celebrate the underrated console with an improvement on an already respected Amstrad game - Yie Are Kung Fu. In terms of arcade perfect (well, as close as you can with an 8-bit home computer), this 'Turbo' edition is the pinnacle of replicating the Konami classic. It's very responsive - that freezing that the original did with every hit is gone, and the redone backdrops are lovely (with a tip of the hat to Double Dragon and Street Fighter, too). It's more playable than it has ever been, and I will come out and say that this is now the best home port of this arcade game.

CRITICISM



Above: Tribute to Double Dragon backdrop.

frustrating than others. Make no mistake, this isn't easy by any means, and perseverance is key if you want to stand any chance of completing all the stages.

PRESENTATION 88%

Nice loading screen. Same menu from the original that isn't really required.

GRAPHICS 95%

Gorgeous. Well animated and silky smooth. Brilliant use of the CPC+ colour palette.

SOUND 85%

Just as good as it was first time around.

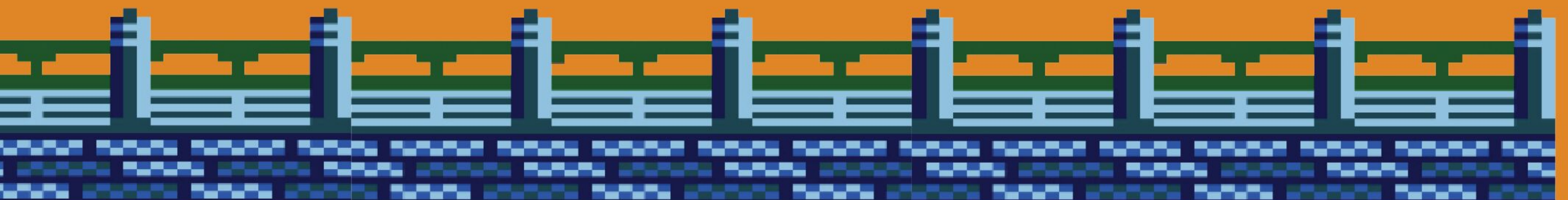
ADDICTIVENESS 75%

Good for beat-em up fans. Frustratingly too fast at times.

LASTABILITY 80%

Will keep you busy for a long time, especially if you want to master all the moves.

OVERALL 85%



JAX THE DOG

Author: **CAPASOFT**
Released: **2023**

Review by Colin Bell

Poor little *Jax the Dog*, he's gone and got lost and needs to find his way back home. In order to do so, he'll have to work his way through screen after screen of platforming action, collecting all his bones as he goes. Sounds easy enough, but as the game progresses, he'll also have to contend with spikes, fiery pits, a pesky cat, and a flying red ball with a propeller for a head - proper old-school 8-bit baddie.

Jax originally started out life as an Android mobile game before being lovingly brought to the CPC. He's also a real dog! And you can check out his adventures on Instagram at 'jaxcaniche'.

Anyway, back to the game, which essentially plays like *Manic Miner*. You can collect the bones in any order, and as you do, there is a lovely little animation as the bones explode into pixels that fly off the screen. Some



Above: Collect all the bones to help poor little Jax find his way home.



bones, however, require you first to unlock a door, which you'll need a key for, while others need to be accessed via

teleporters or moving platforms. You start the game with three lives,



which can thankfully be topped up along the way by collecting big red hearts. A good thing, as you're going to need them!

The levels are varied in terms of challenge, and while some are straightforward, others require a degree of patience and skill in order to complete.

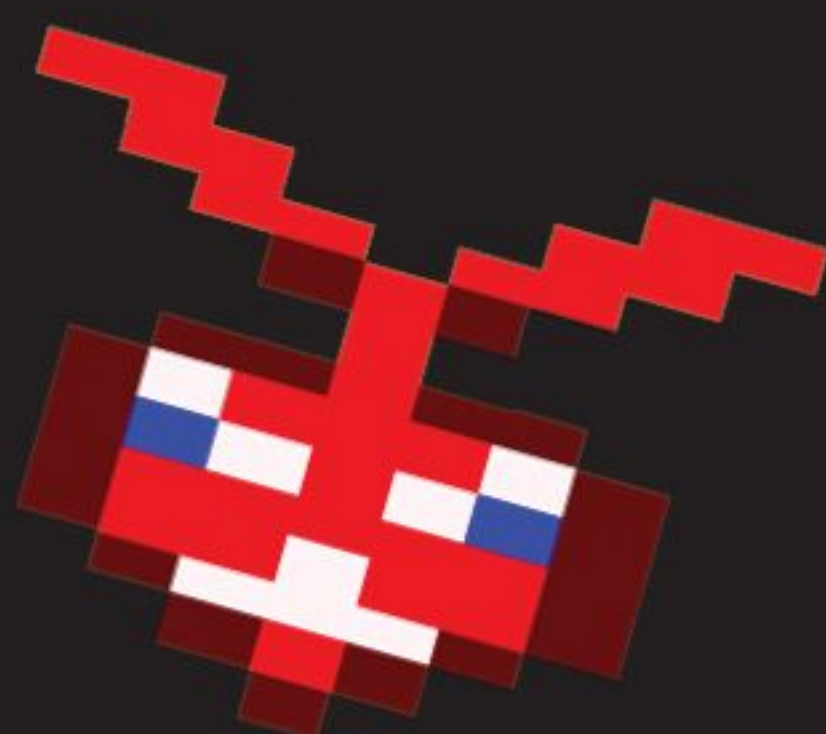
Zoë



CRITICISM

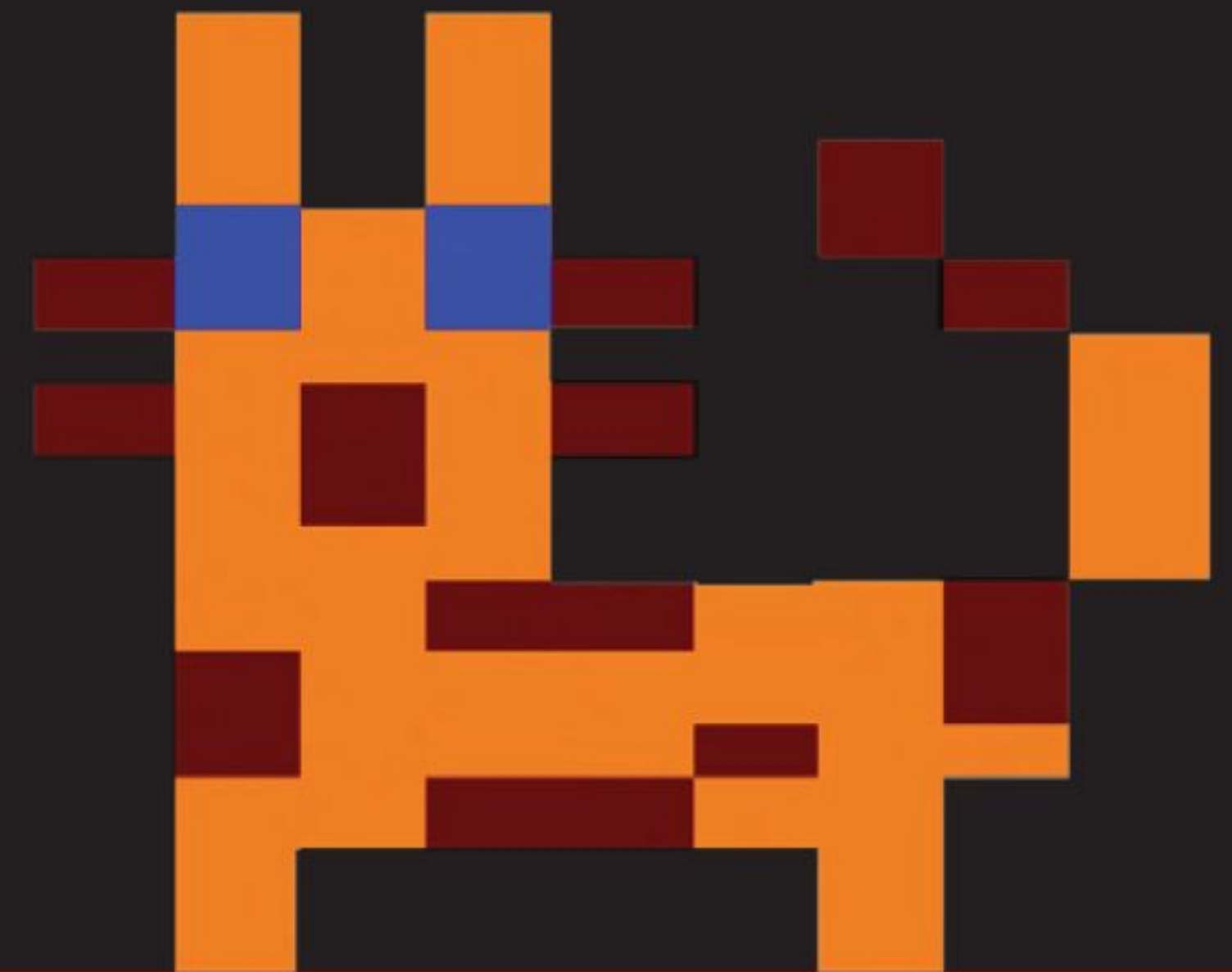
This is a fun Manic Miner-style platformer with a cute doggie protagonist. The controls are very fluid, and while the levels look fairly simple, the movement of some of the enemies makes them downright frustrating at times. That tomato with a propeller on its head is a right menace! There aren't too many levels, but don't expect to get through it all in just one or two tries because there's a sequence to learn before you can guarantee success. Finding the best way to navigate around the moving platforms and bouncing monsters is the secret to success. This is a very fun game where there's just enough to it to make you want to try again. The title screen has a lovely example of modern CPC art, and the same thing is true of the sampled speech. It's a real treat, and a must play!

Graphically, the game is really well drawn and pleasing to the eye. It also features some lovely fluid animations in terms of the sprites. To cap it all off there's a well-



composed music track that plays throughout. We could do with some sound effects however, but other than that, I genuinely can't find fault with this game.

For a decent old-school platforming challenge, you can't go wrong with *Jax the Dog*.



Above: Elevator action! Later levels require a higher degree of skill to complete.

Colin



CRITICISM

Do you know what? I'm so glad there's finally a new CPC game that delivers a decent challenge and that I'm not going to complete it after one or two sittings. Graphically it looks good, with polished animations and not a flicker in sight. You'll think it's going to be easy, but a degree of skill is required if you're going to finish it. What else can I say? This is solid single-screen platforming gameplay at its best!

PRESENTATION 89%

Gorgeous loading screen and nice title screen with an the option to redefine keys. .

GRAPHICS 92%

Lovely and colourful, well drawn with polished sprite animations.

SOUND 86%

Great music and sampled speech, but we do need some sfx please!

ADDICTIVENESS 90%

Has that one more try factor about it. You'll want to come back and play again.

LASTABILITY 89%

Yeah! A game that's going to last longer than one or two sittings.

OVERALL 90%

BLOKTRIS

Author: **Under4MHZ**
Released: **2023**

Bloktris converts a DOS classic to the Amstrad, including the detailed background images. The usual *Tetris* music (Korobeiniki, for those of you struggling to remember the name) is here, too, but you'll quickly want to turn that off because, unfortunately, it's a lot slower than it should be. I kept playing up to higher difficulty levels to see if the music ever speeds up alongside the gameplay,

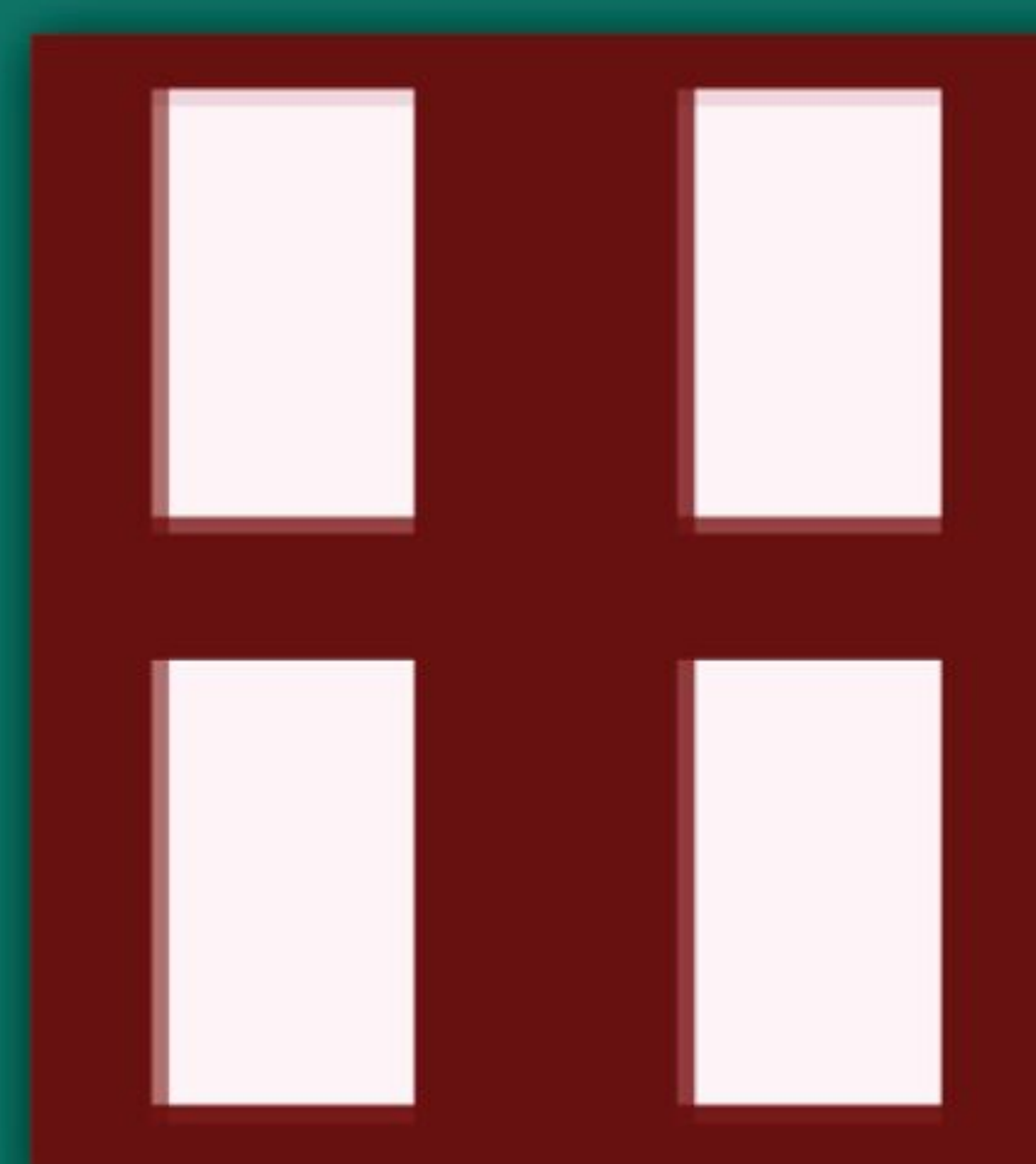


Above: It's Tetris, isn't it? I bet you've got the music stuck in your head, now...



but sadly, it does not. If the music doesn't get you, then the constant blips and bleeps that occur every time you move or drop a block certainly will. This is a game that desperately needs a "music/SFX" toggle option. Graphically, this is a great version of *Tetris*. The colours are bold, the shapes stand out very well, and the

backgrounds are pretty interesting. Backgrounds vary depending on the starting location on the Russian map, which adds some nice variety. Some of the colour choices are a little on the eye-straining side (was it entirely necessary to put bright white with cyan for some of the blocks?), but on the whole, it works very well, and you know exactly what you're looking at in any given moment.



If there's one gripe to be had, it's with the controls. Mostly, they are fluid, but if you're dropping a block in a small gap, the block won't continue to fall after you've pressed the

Zoë



I'm not entirely sure what this latest Tetris clone is bringing to the CPC scene that we didn't already have. It's a nice game of Tetris, sure, but putting that aside, I'm not convinced there's anything here that will pull aficionados away from their go-to Tetris game, the one they'll have been playing for years already.

That said, the colours are very nice, and the speed is just right. I seriously hate the fact that the spin key and quick drop keys are not in intuitive places; so I kept dropping blocks when I wanted to spin them. This is probably something you could get used to with time however, and it is the only major gripe I have with the game. It's yet another Tetris game. Works well, but I can't see it displacing anyone's existing favourites.

CRITICISM



standard drop key; you'll have to keep pressing it to continue. This allows even a newcomer to correctly slip an L block into a small gap, which may be a welcome addition, but it removes all the skill from



Gordon



As good as it is to see a venerable Tetris variant being ported from DOS to the CPC, I must honestly admit that I don't feel particularly inspired to play another tile-drop game. More often than not, they offer the same thing, and I find myself in a gaming Groundhog Day. Despite this, Bloktris is an admirable port and offers all the lovely backgrounds, as seen on the PC counterpart. The gameplay is fluid, and it delivers exactly as advertised. Players who love this sort of thing will undoubtedly get addicted - and it is a polished game that would have sold well back in the day - there is a good sense of progression in the game. In terms of the audio, I find that the sound effects are on the same volume level as the music - I did find that a little jarring and took me out of the sedate concentration that Tetris tends to induce in me.

CRITICISM

the game for everyone else. Also, even when the block is clearly in place, you'll still have to press drop again for it to have officially landed, in the game's eyes. This only happens in small gaps, which makes it even stranger because that suggests it's intentional.

The game offers ten difficulty levels and the choice of starting with various numbers of randomly filled lines already on the screen, from zero to

thirteen. This gives a wide variety of difficulty options that can be tailored to suit any level of Tetris player.

It's a nice implementation of a classic game with some excellent design choices and only a few minor gripes. Definitely worth giving this one a look.



PRESENTATION 85%

This is very nicely polished, let down only by slow music.

GRAPHICS 75%

The bright colours and simple shapes work well.

SOUND 65%

Sadly, the music is slow and has odd pauses.

ADDICTIVENESS 95%

It's Tetris, you already know it's addictive.

LASTABILITY 95%

It's Tetris, you already know you'll want another go.

**OVERALL
83%**



RÍGOR MORTÍS



Review by Gordon King

Author: **Churrosoft**
Released: **2023**

Based on the darkly humorous and macabre Spanish comic of the same name, the CPC adaptation follows the exploits of Death - yes, the Grim Reaper himself. Ladies and gentlemen, this one is a bit of a poacher; he's the equivalent of an ambulance-chasing lawyer in the realm of mortality. Instead of being present at places of passing, like farmers being mangled in combine harvesters or foolish parkour teens failing to emulate *Spiderman*, this Reaper loafes about in hospitals and prisons - easy pickings, or so we

might think.

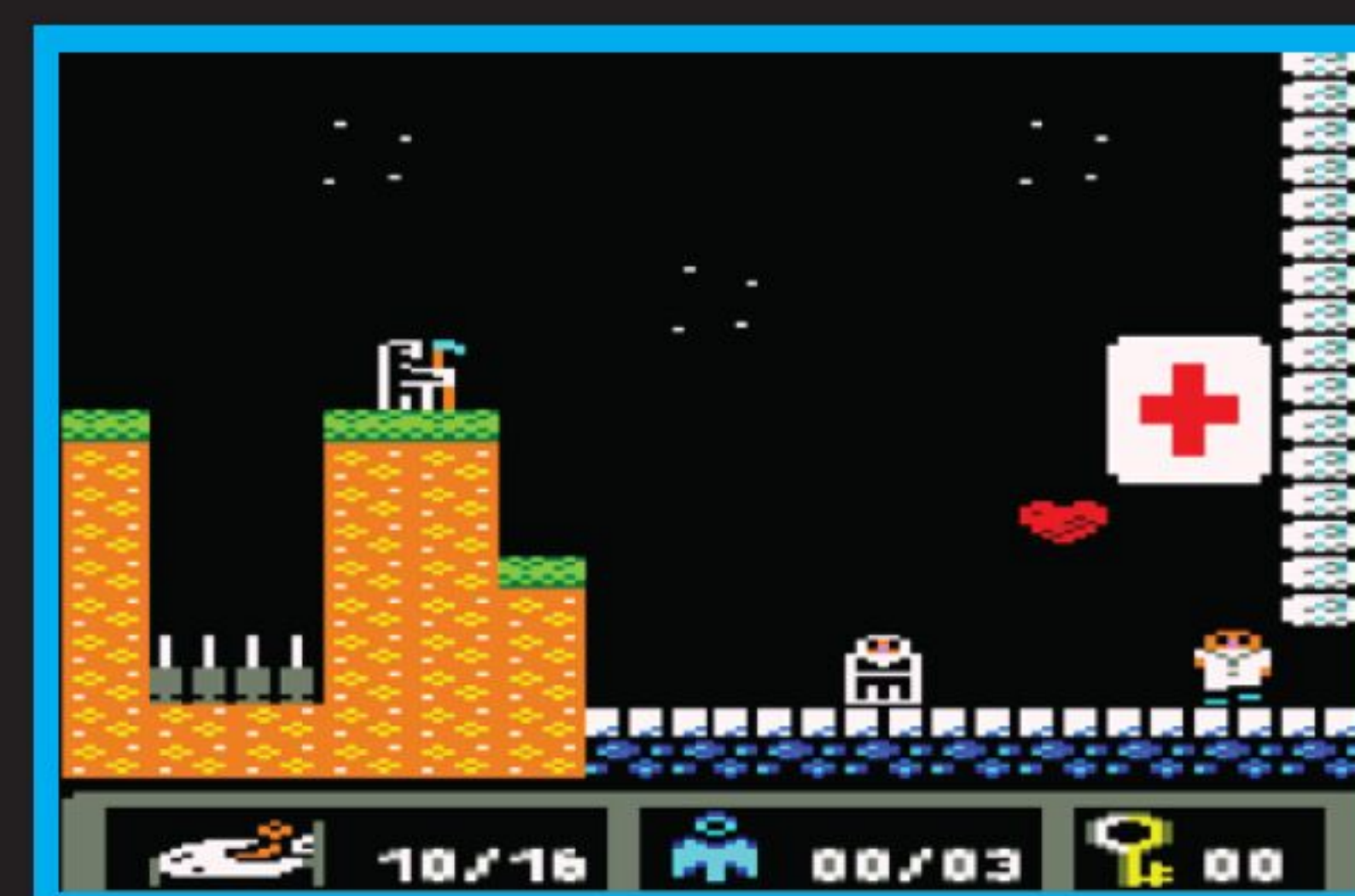
But guess what? The doctors, nurses, and nuns are having none of this death malarkey - they are



Above: Platform action! Keys are required to unlock doors that lead to more unsuspecting souls.



determined to save lives within the best of their professional capability so they can tell anxiously awaiting family members, "We tried everything we could". So, here we find Mr. Reaper with a bit of a



- he must locate three souls ready for departure and take them to the Soul Tank in the heavenly abode up in



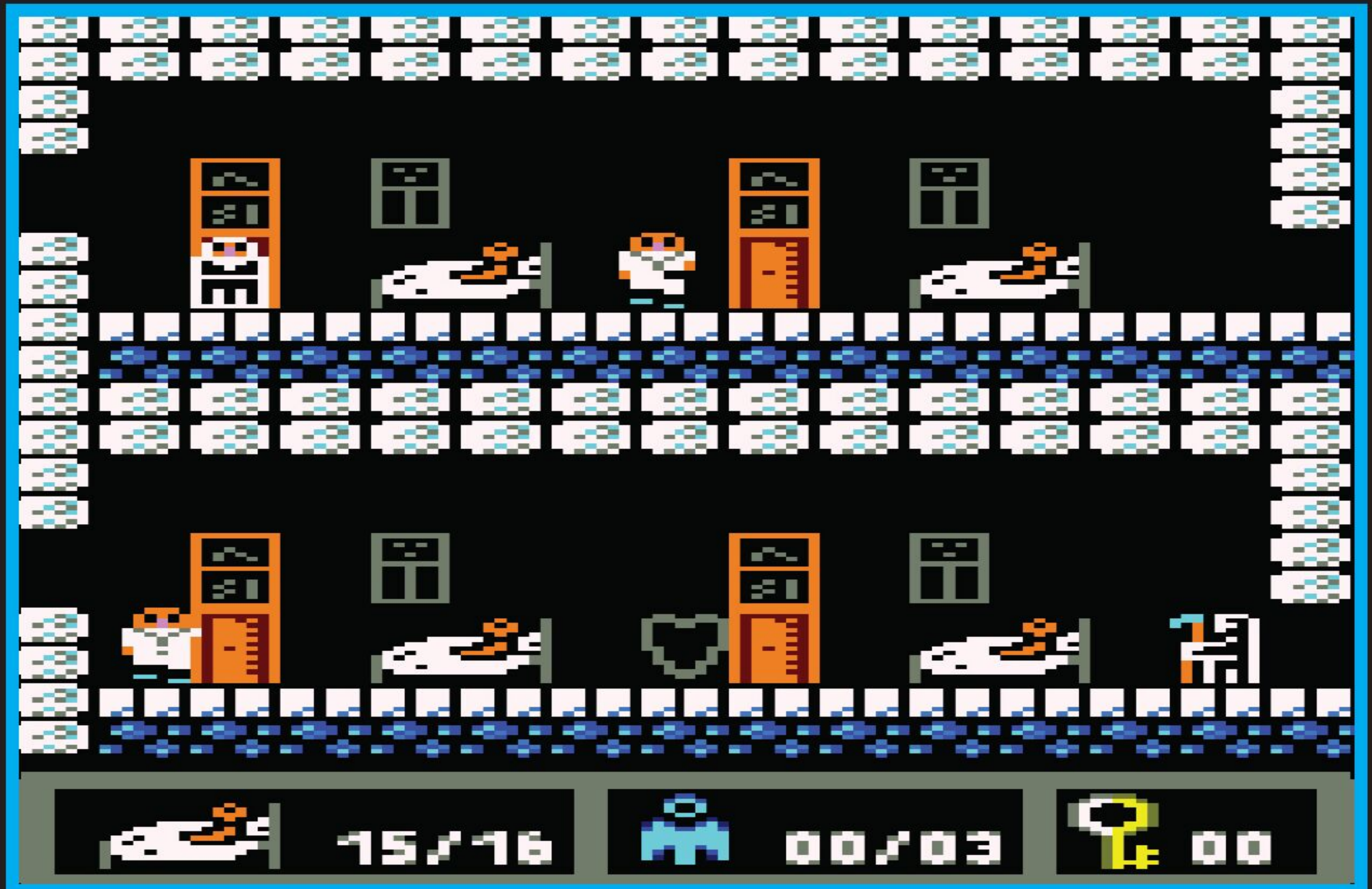
Gordon



CRITICISM

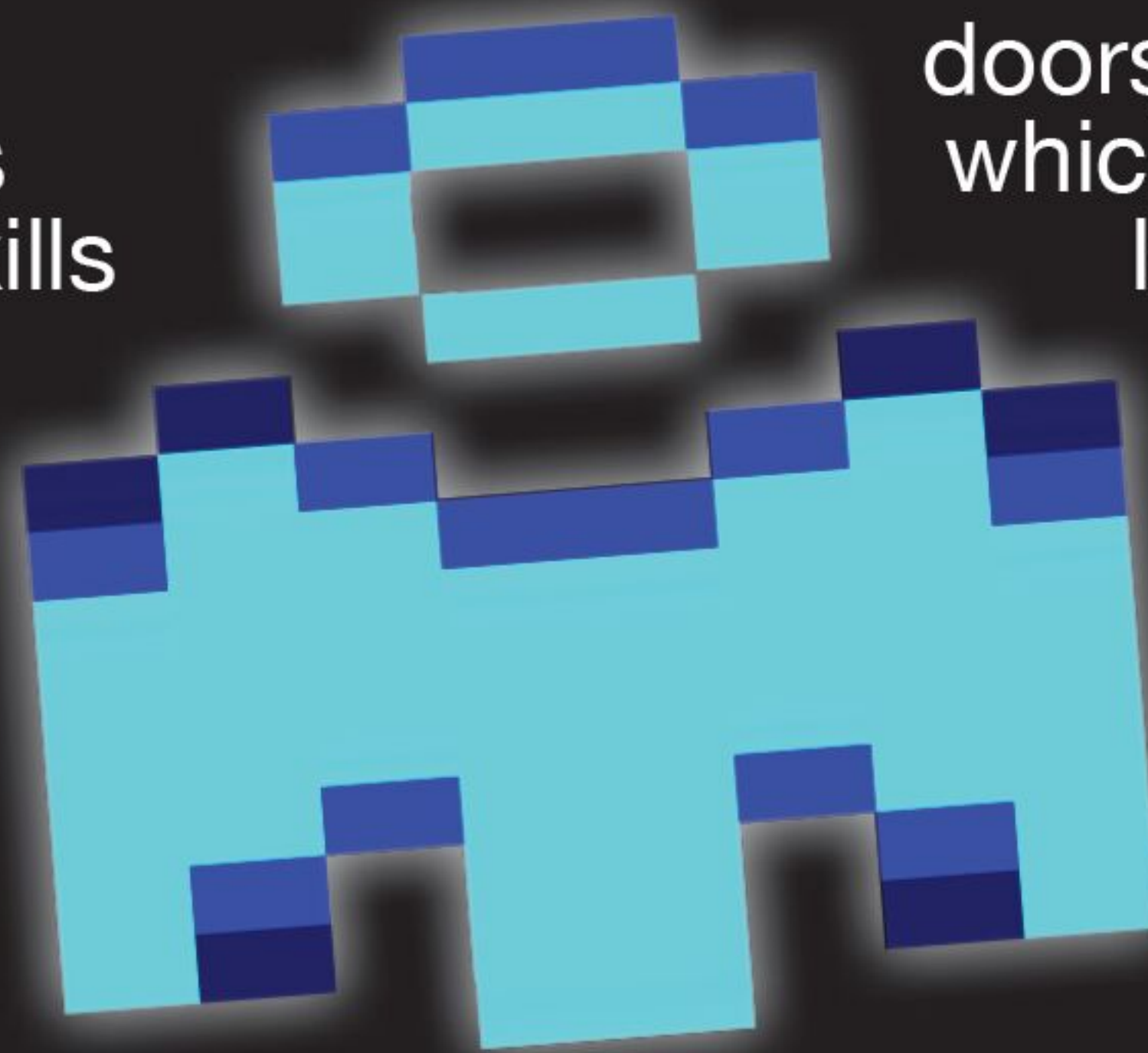
Playing the role of the Grim Reaper makes for an interesting subject for a game, as long as the sanctity of life and the passing of it aren't considered taboo subjects. If you've played Churrosoft's previous release, 'Chloe Learns to Recycle', then you'll find yourself in familiar territory. The game offers little beyond a basic flick-screen platformer with some reasonable level design. It can be fun to discover new rooms, but often this happens by accident due to overshooting jumps, a consequence of the persistent floaty controls inherent to the Mojon Twins engine that this game is built on. Landing on a single-square block can be extremely frustrating; more often than not, you miss the target and fall to a screen below. The spike rooms scattered throughout the game are perhaps the most annoying, as it's nearly impossible to escape them once you land on them. Despite these challenges, the game remains enjoyable and worth playing for a platforming session.

the clouds. Achieving this is a lot harder than he assumed, and it



Above: Souls galore! A quick visit to the local hospital provides easy pickings.

will take all his platforming skills to reach his workload for the evening. The staff in the buildings will thwart his hand of finality, there are deadly spike traps with his name etched on them, and



doors are locked - which will require long routes to obtain a matching key. This is the shift he expected when he clocked in for the evening.

Colin



CRITICISM

Sooner or later, you'll dance with the Grim Reaper! Yet another decent little platformer from Churrosoft. It's basic but good fun if just for a while. Churrosoft do, however, need to remove or improve the frustrating spikes that detract from the gameplay. An interesting character that I'd like to see more of in a future title.

PRESENTATION 70%

Unlike Chloe, this one now comes with English instructions.

GRAPHICS 68%

Big, blocky, cheery sprites, well drawn, and with enough variety.

SOUND 67%

Nice enough music, but can grate after a while.

ADDICTIVENESS 62%

The floaty controls may frustrate many players.

LASTABILITY 61%

Not a massive game, but does provide a decent challenge.

OVERALL 65%

INDIANA JONES

and the CPC Adventures



This summer saw the much-anticipated return of Indiana Jones to the big screen for one last adventure before actor Harrison Ford hangs up his hat and whip for good. Fans of the franchise, much like myself, are hoping for a return to form after being sorely let down by the last movie, which we won't go into here as, quite frankly, it was utter pants.

So, with the 'man in the hat' back in action, I thought it only prudent that AMTIXCPC take a look at the Indiana Jones games released for the CPC.

FORTUNE & GLORY!

First up for the Amstrad CPC is *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Released originally by Atari in 1985 as an arcade cabinet, the game features tracks from John Williams' musical score and digitised voice clips of Harrison Ford and Amrish Puri, who played the main bad guy in the movie, Mola Ram. Played over three stages, you once again assume

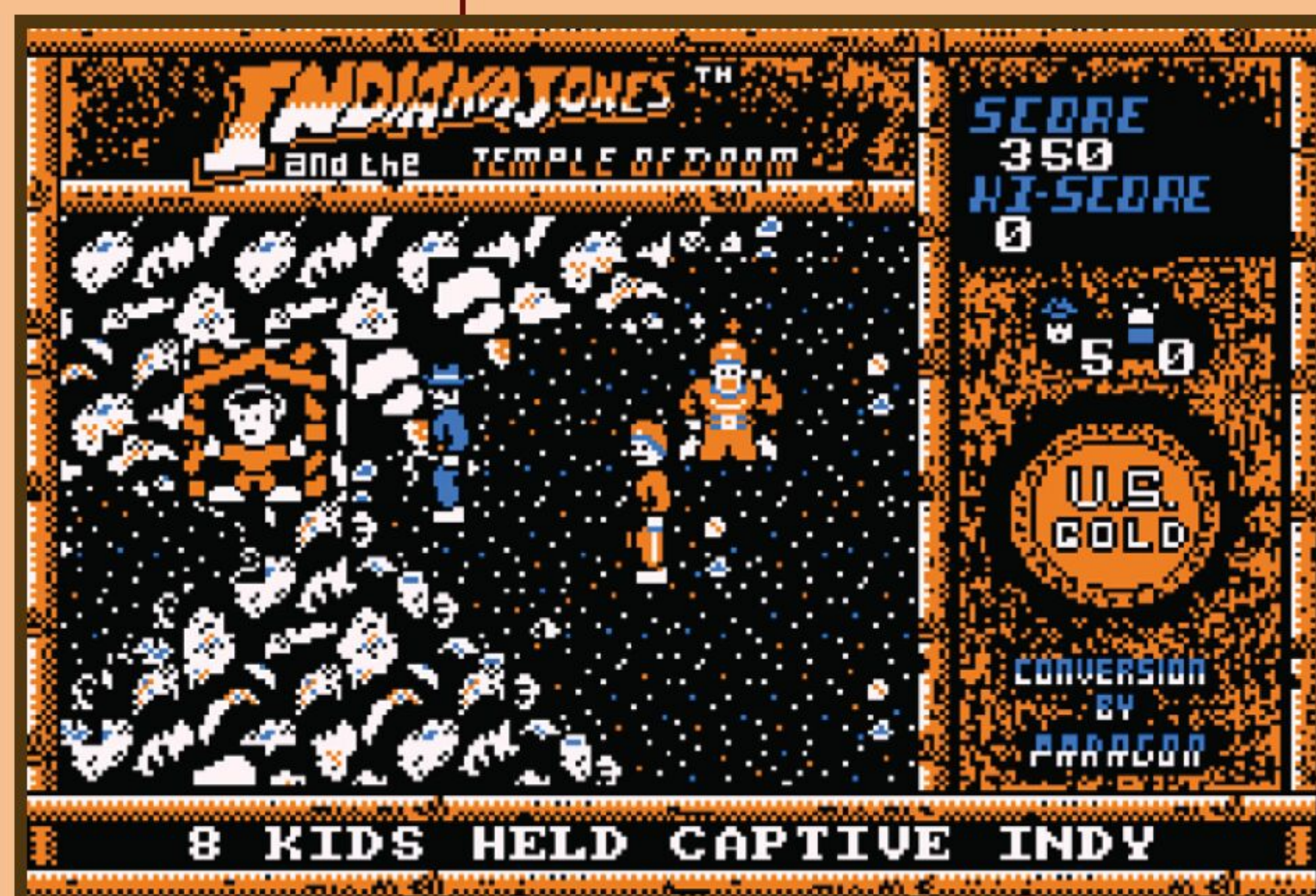
the role of Indy, who has to first rescue kidnapped children



from the Indian village, then make good his escape in a mine cart before finally recovering one of the Sankara stones from the Thuggee's sacrificial altar. This process repeats itself four times, getting tougher every time.

On the fourth time around, the sacrificial chamber is replaced by the final showdown with Mola Ram on top of a rope bridge across a river. Defeat Mola Ram, and he'll plunge to his death, allowing you to advance to a bonus stage where you'll get to collect gold statues for extra points.

I remember this game fondly, for it was the first game I loaded up when we got a secondhand CPC464 with colour monitor and a ton of copied software. I can remember being in awe of the





Above: Free the children then race through the mines to the next stage.

loading screen, and then the game started! There he was, Indiana was on my screen, and I was controlling him! Sure, he was somewhat blue in colour, a theme that seemed to run throughout all the CPC releases, as we'll find out, but he was well animated and had his trusty whip at his side, which made a great sound effect as whipped Thuggee guards or swung from platform to platform. Okay, so the graphics weren't perfect, and there was some annoying flickering to contend with, but overall, in terms of an arcade port, this was really well done. The game also has some excellent music taken from the movie and features a faithfully recreated mine-cart chase level between stages.

Not bad for Indy's first outing, but be warned, the game can be frustratingly difficult, especially on later stages.

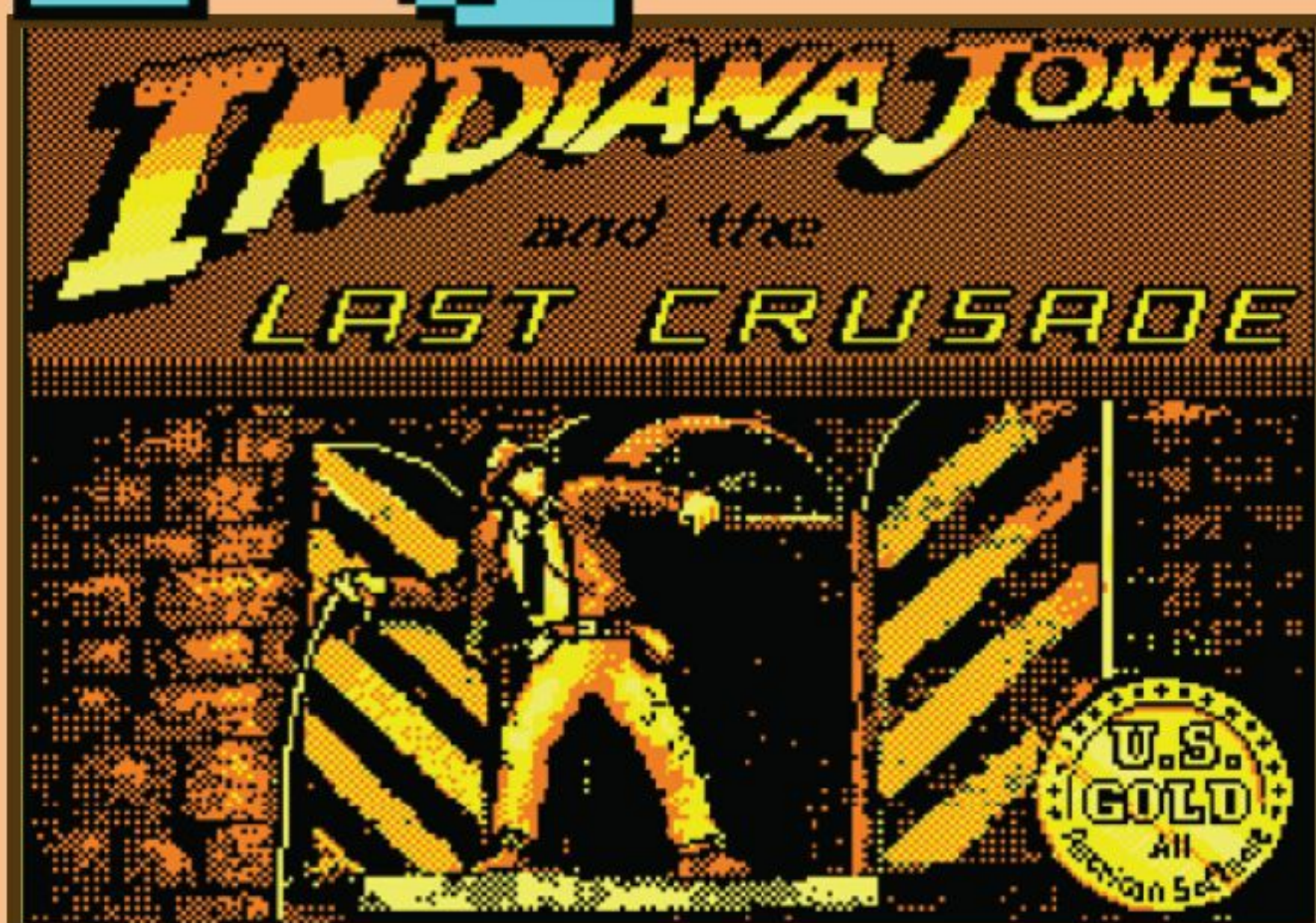
YOU CHOSE WISELY!

Released in 1989, the same year as the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was an action platformer from Lucasfilm Games and once more saw you take on the role of Henry Jones Jnr. This time, you're following in your father's footsteps as you embark on a quest to find the Holy

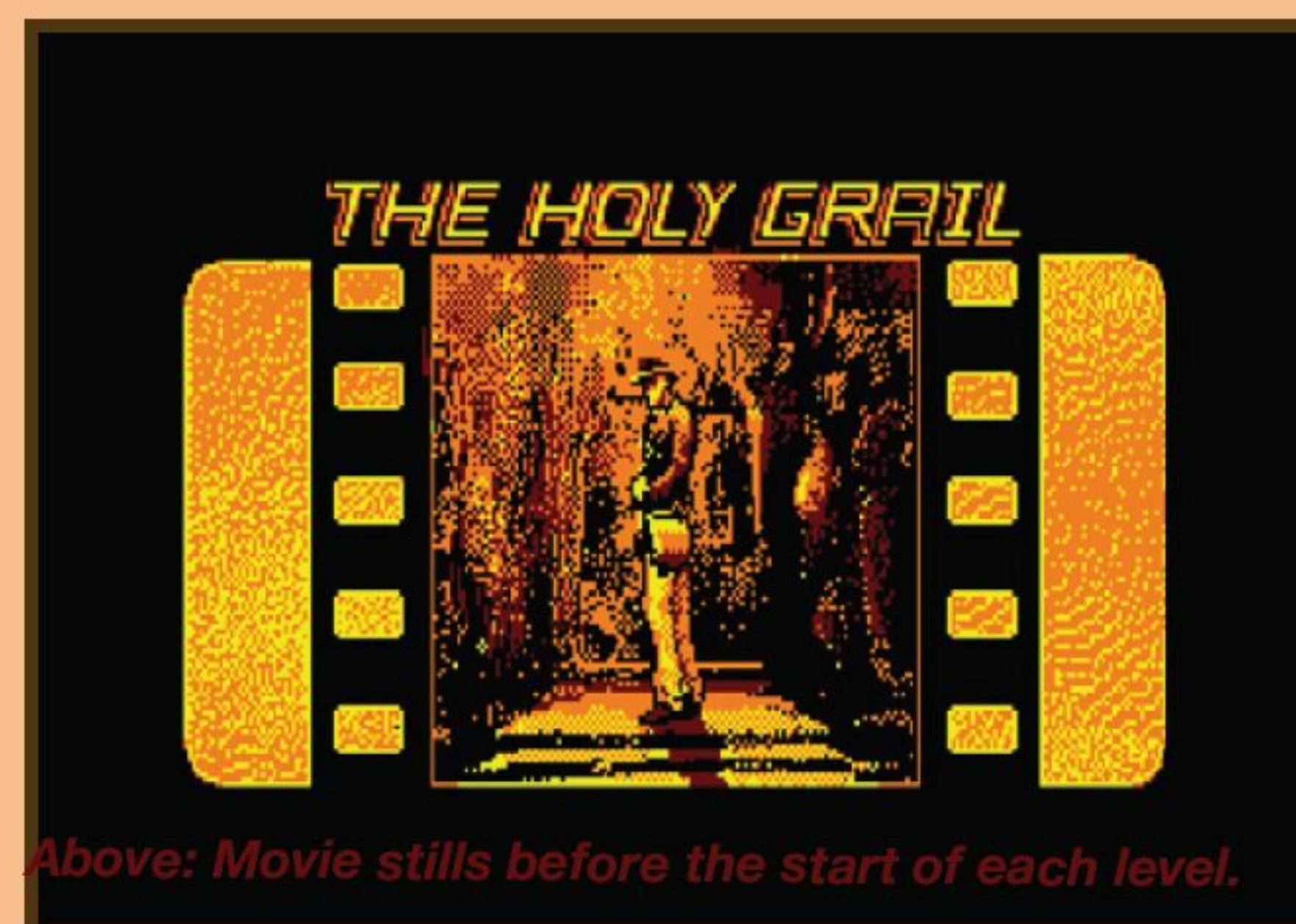
Grail before the Nazis do. En route, you'll need to jump, punch, and whip your way through several levels, collecting several other artefacts as you go. The levels follow the locations of the movie, with the first being set in Colorado.



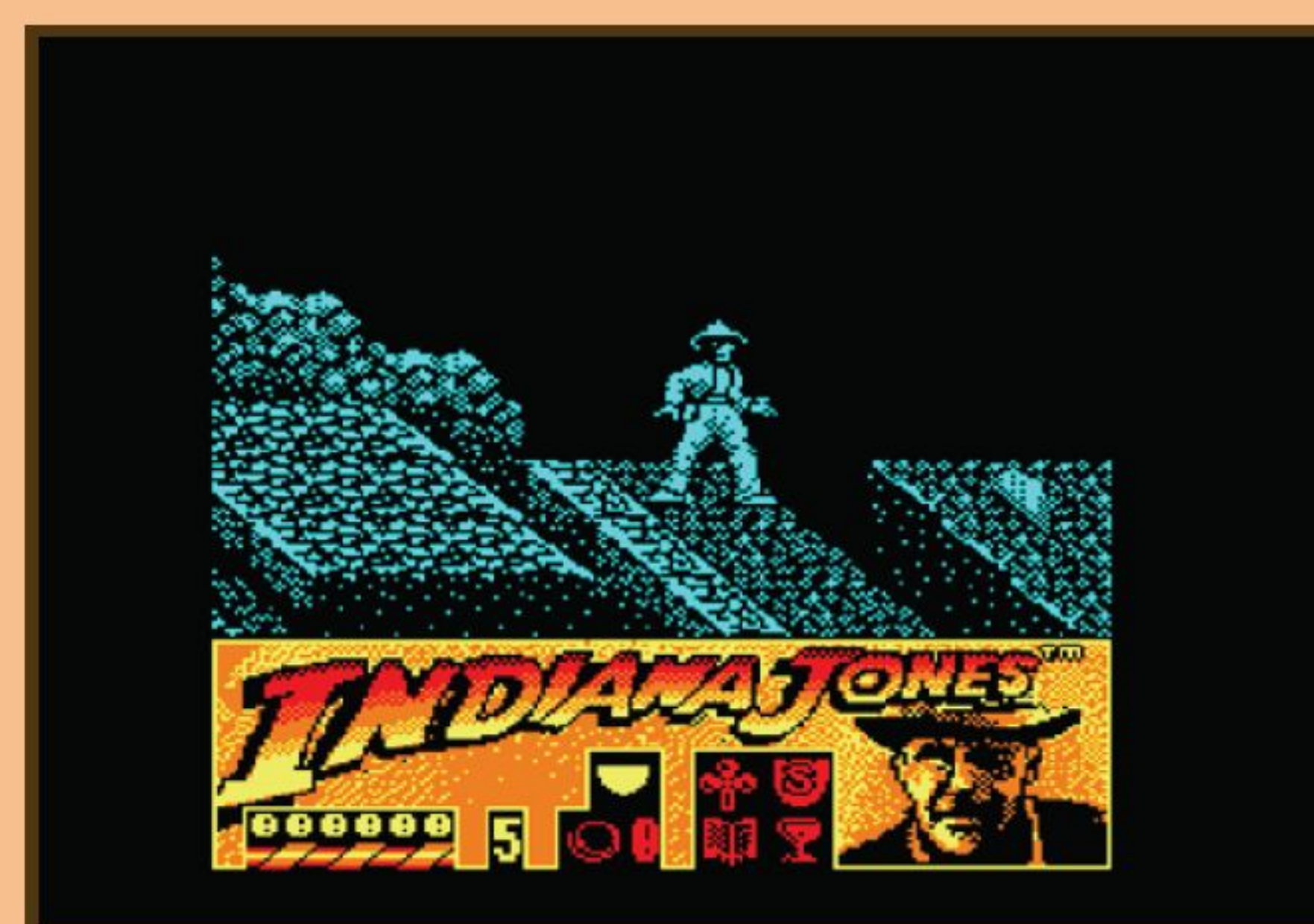
Here, you take on the role of young Indiana as he searches for the fabled Cross of Coronado. Once found, you must make good your



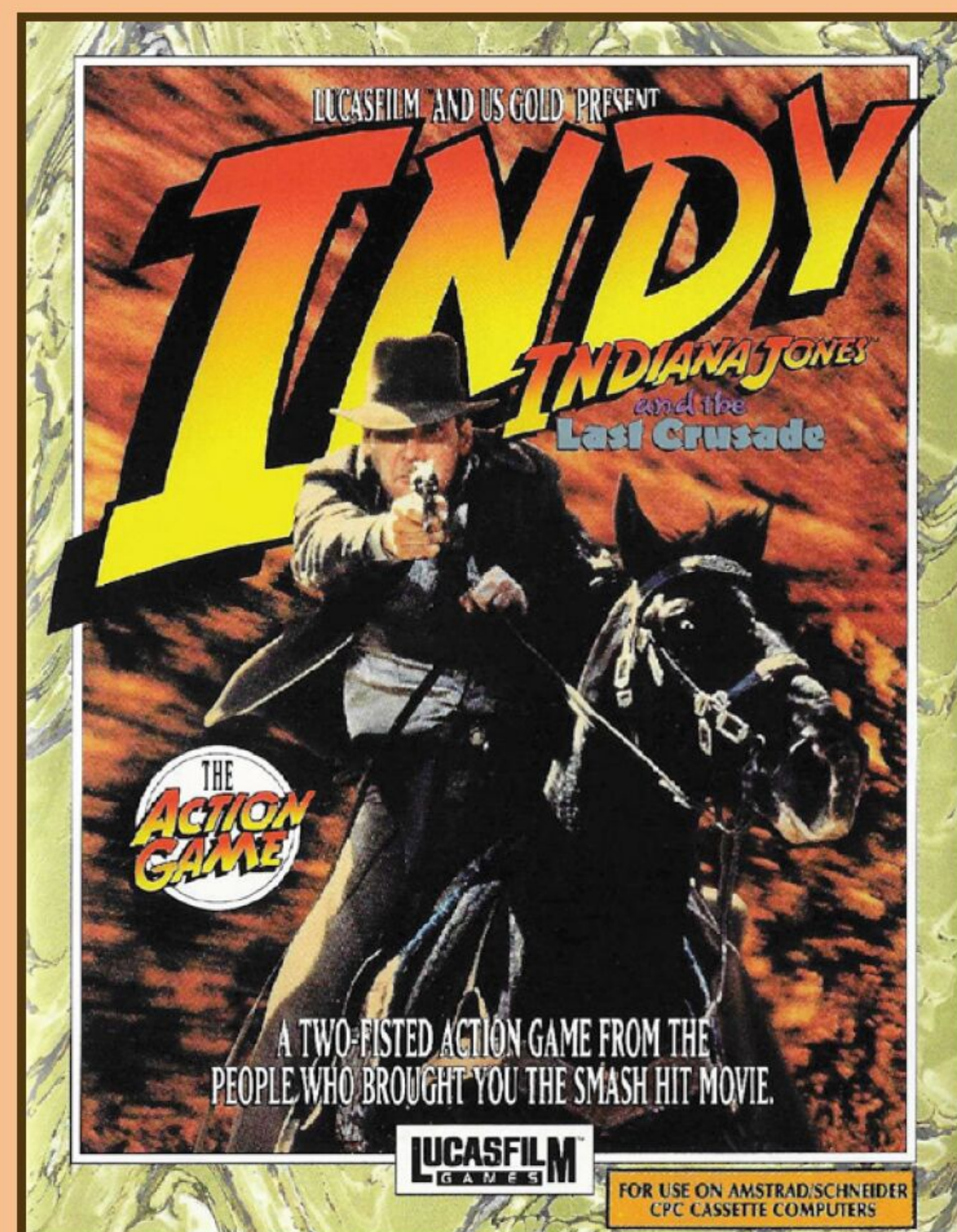
Above: It may be lacking colours but the Last Crusade loading screen looks great.



Above: Movie stills before the start of each level.

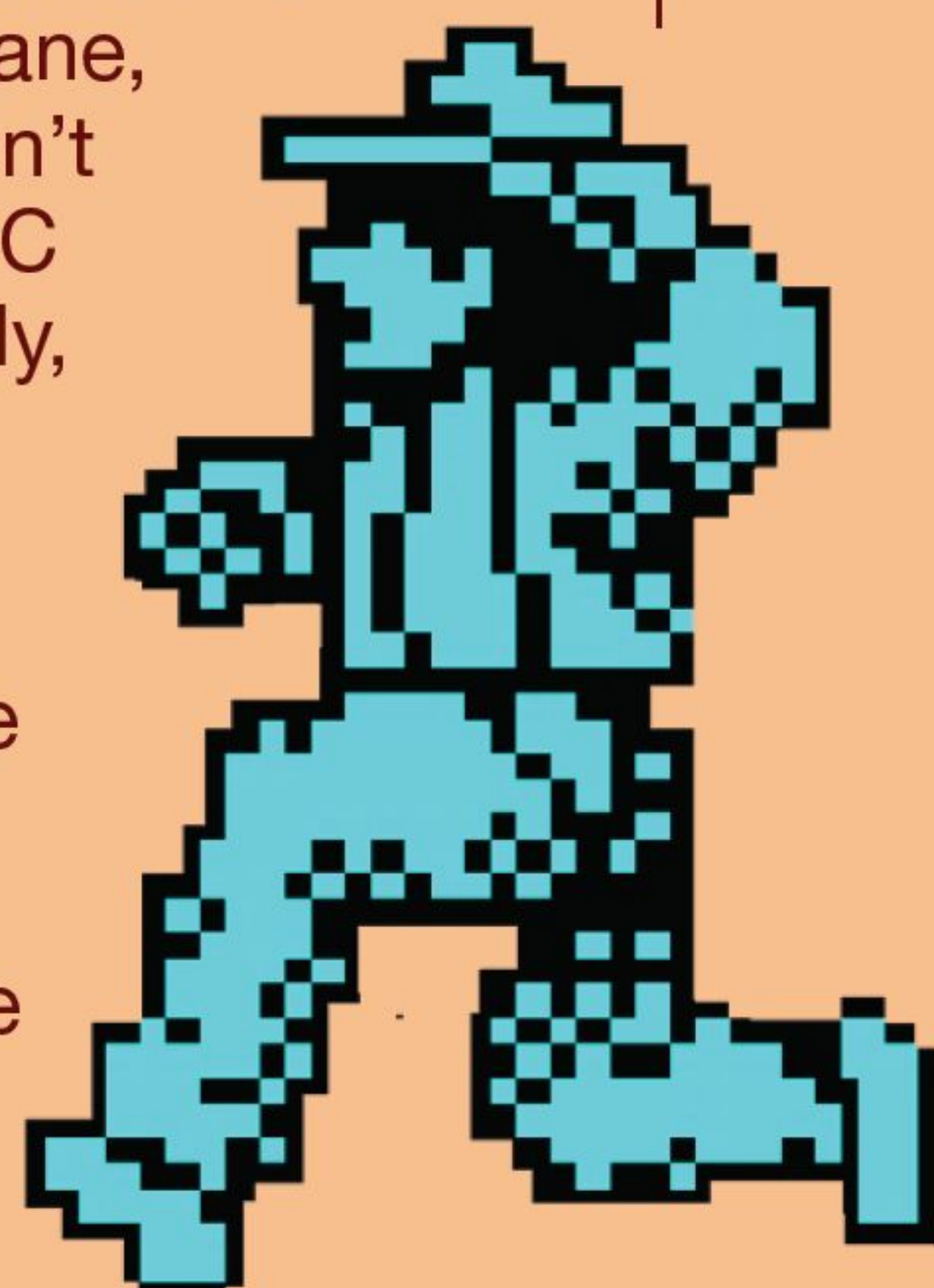


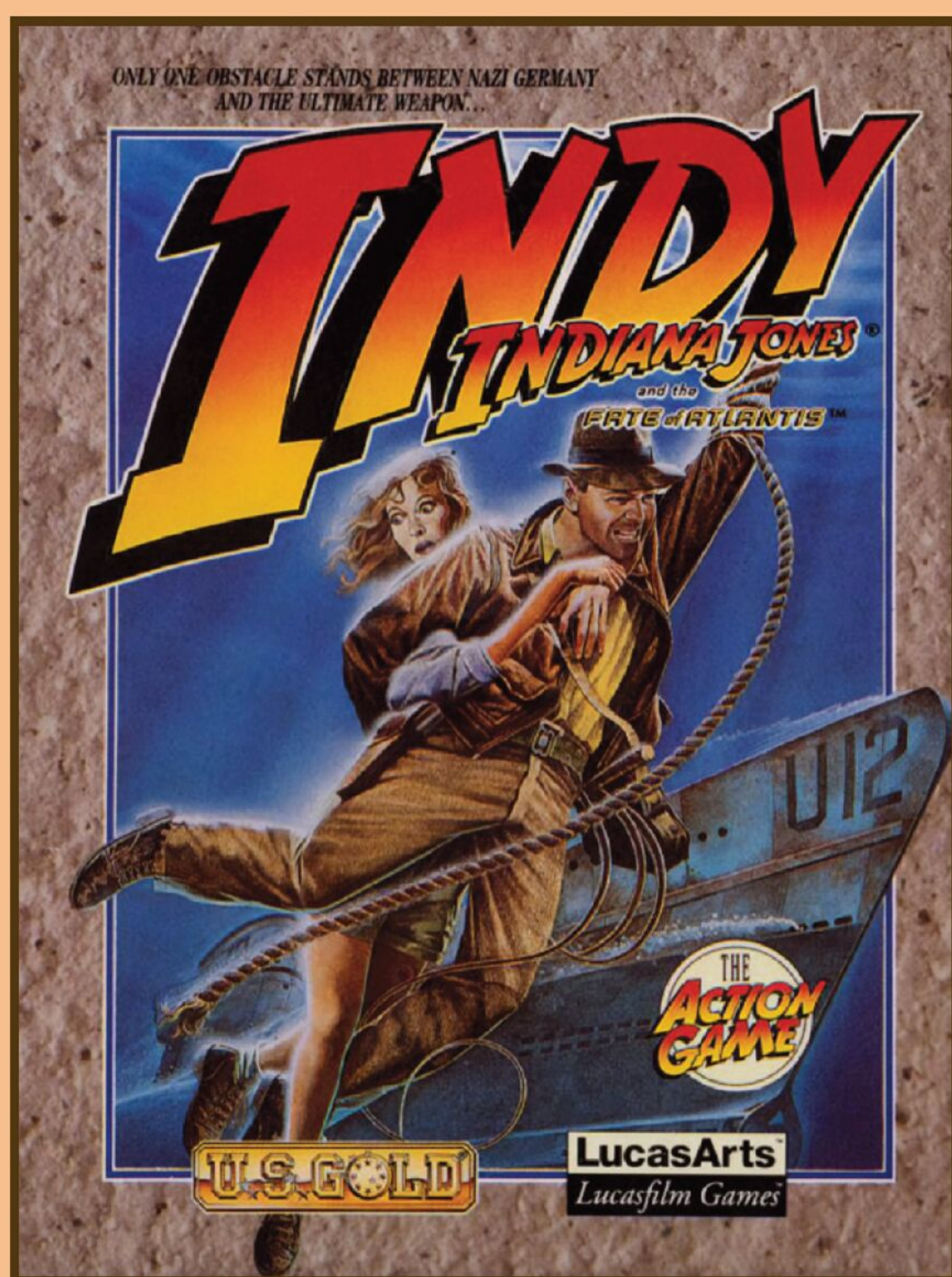
escape from the caves and across a moving circus train full of animals who attempt to



Above: A familiar site. The Last Crusade cover that appears on many systems.

get in your way and knock you from the train. Next, it's off to the catacombs under Venice city where the now older Indy must find the Knight's Shield, the second marker, and then, as if by magic, be teleported to and scale the walls of Castle Brunwald in Salzburg, Austria where his father is being held captive by the Nazis. The third level is set on the German Zeppelin, which has turned around and is headed back to Germany. Here, you must locate your dad's Grail Diary, which he's managed to misplace, before making your escape from the Zeppelin by descending a ladder and onto the attached biplane, which you don't see in the CPC version. Finally, it's off to the Valley of the Crescent Moon and the Grail Temple, where Indy must navigate a series of devious

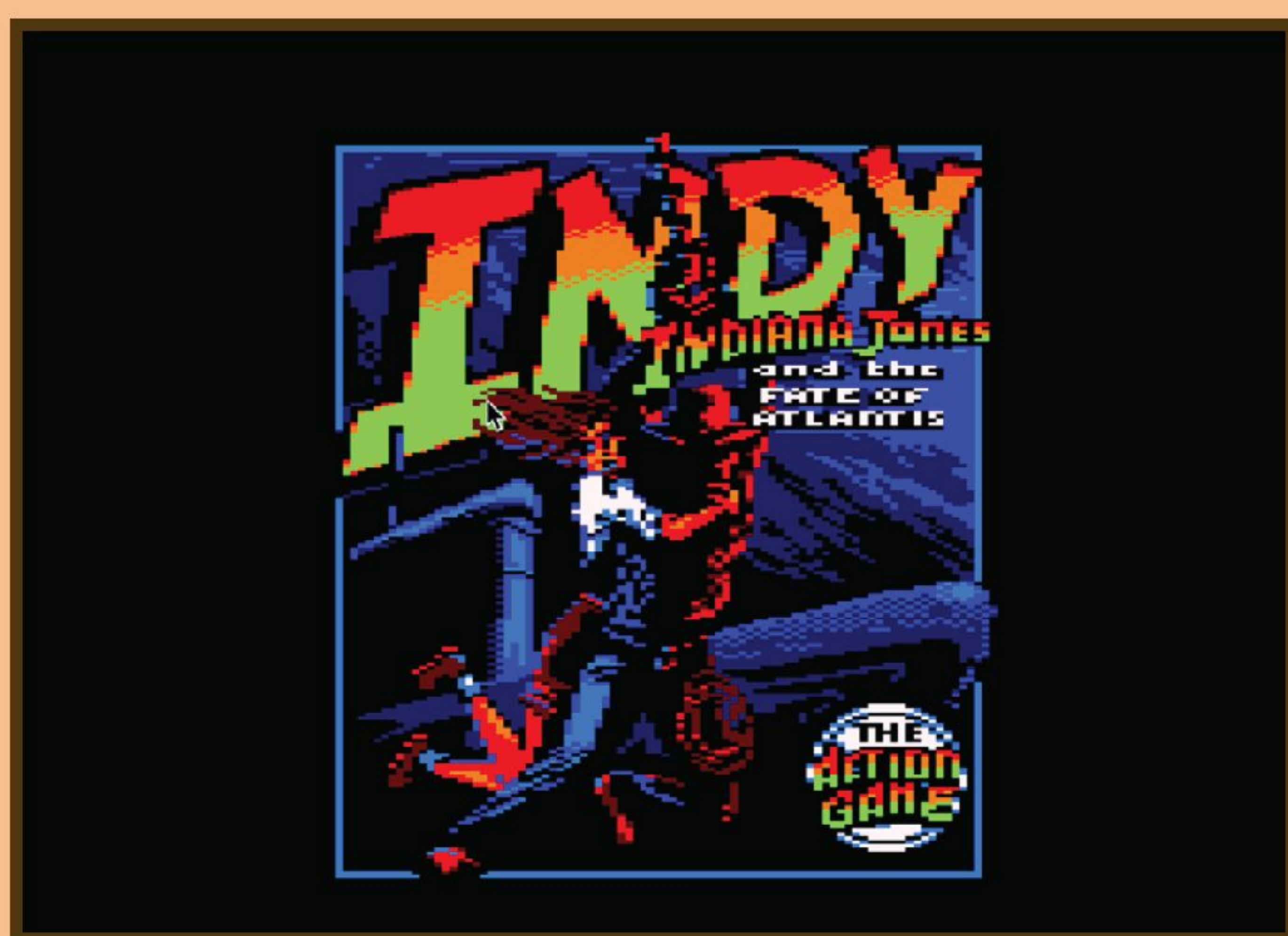




traps and perilous pitfalls in order to reach the ultimate prize, the Holy Grail itself. Sadly, the CPC version suffers from a lazy ZX Spectrum port, and once again Indy is completely blue, as is the whole screen. The graphics are well drawn, however, and the



Above: Two heads are better than one. Play as either Indy or Sophia in FOA.



Above: The FOA loading screen. Well at least there's other colours this time.

animations are nice. Also good are the film stills between each level, as is the well-composed rendition of the iconic theme tune. An okay platformer

but plenty of room for improvement.

INDY'S FINAL FATE...

Just enough time for one last outing before the CPC itself became an ancient artefact - *steady on Ed!*. *Indiana Jones & The Fate of Atlantis* is an action adventure game presented in an isometric format that is often overlooked, thanks in part to many CPC users not knowing it actually exists.

The Nazis are back once again and are this time trying to locate the lost city of Atlantis. Why? Because they're after orichalcum, a powerful material only found in Atlantis that they plan to use to build the ultimate nuclear bomb. So it's up to you, as Indy, to stop them. Thankfully, this time, Indy's not alone, and his good friend and renowned Atlantis expert Sophia Hapgood is along for the ride.

The first level is set in

a Monte Carlo casino, and if I'm honest, the game starts slowly. Persevere, however, and from level two onwards the action and storyline hots up rather nicely, with a good balance of object finding and whip-cracking action.

Being an action game, there is a greater focus on the combat side of things rather than puzzles, although there are some. You also get to switch characters and play as Sophia, who has certain skills which come in handy from time to time and must be used in order to progress. She also comes in very handy should Indy be captured and needs rescuing.

Graphically, the game is colourful and well presented in its isometric format. Indy is indeed blue again! But they finally got his hat the right colour, phew!

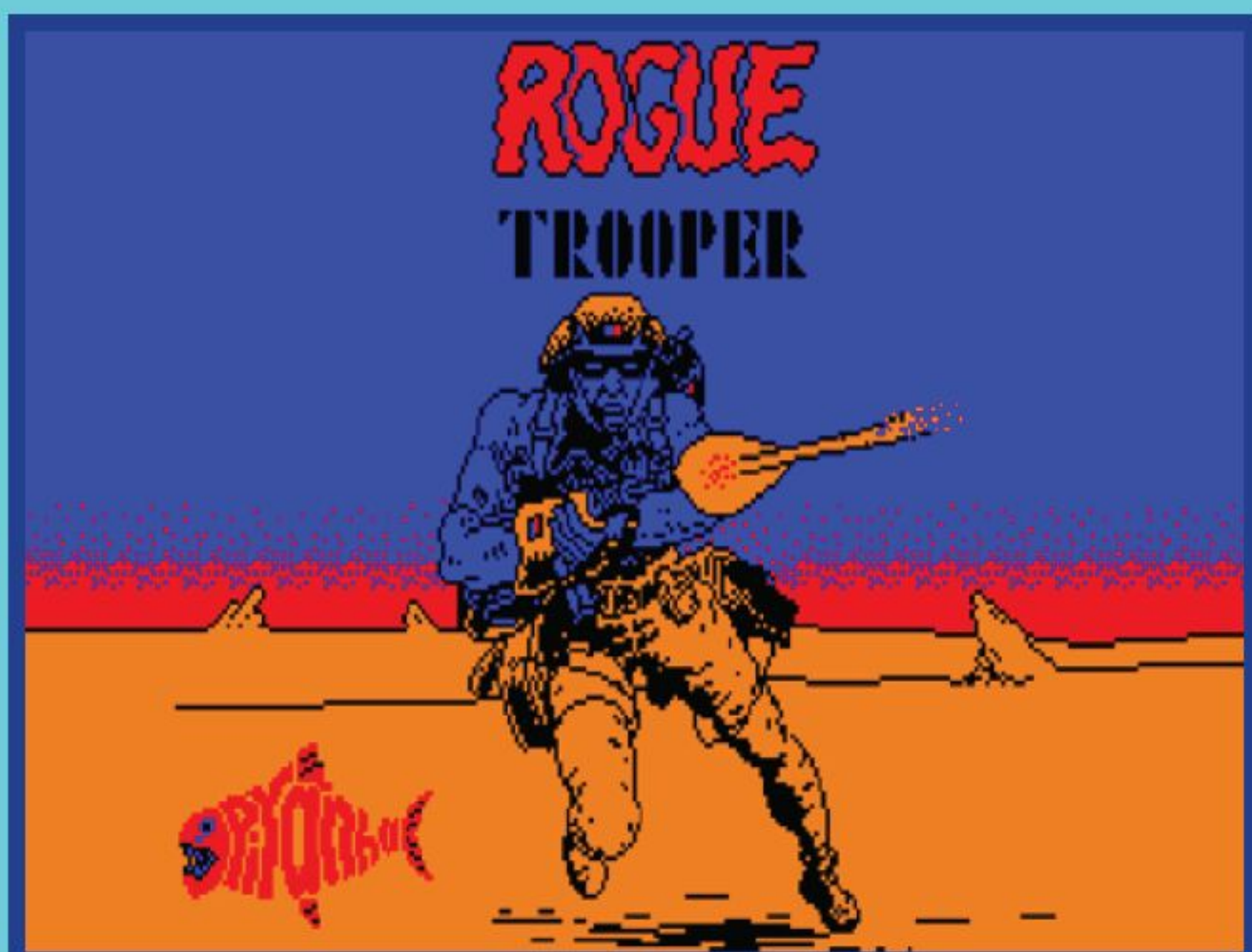
Again, it's not perfect by any means, but it's the closest you'll come to a large-scale Indy adventure on the CPC. It's also quite rare to find boxed and complete, so keep an eye out for it, and maybe you'll find your Fortune and Glory!



Right: Feeling blue again Indy? Well, at least your hat's finally the right colour!

For our first 'Flash Back' this issue, Colin Bell takes a look at and reminisces about Piranha Software's *Rogue Trooper*, a sci-fi isometric adventure set amongst the dangerous wastelands of Nu-Earth.

Rogue Trooper was the first ever game to be released based on one of the popular 2000AD comic book characters. Set on Nu-Earth, where a war between the Norts and Southers rages on, old Rogue is on a one-man mission to expose the truth about the Quartz Zone Massacre, where he and his fellow genetically modified infantrymen were betrayed by a Souther traitor. Thankfully, the traitors' deeds where captured on no less than eight Vid-Tapes, and it's now up to you to locate them and then escape in the awaiting shuttle craft.



Got all that? Good. The game itself is presented in an isometric format where you must wander from screen to screen in order to locate the missing Vid-Tapes. Along the way you'll encounter your arch enemies, The Norts, who, as well as deploying ground troops, have



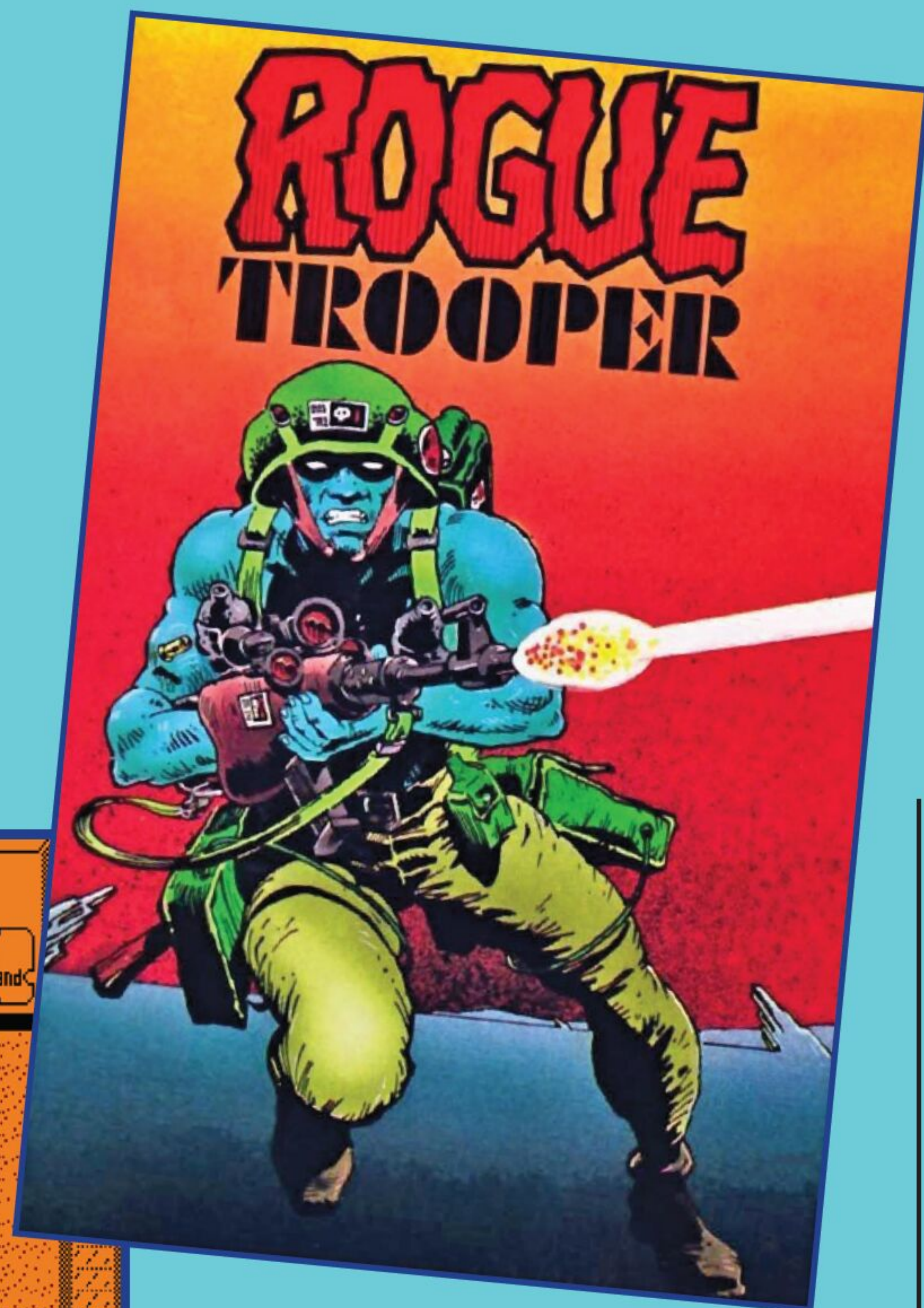
set up deadly pill-box turrets and laid minefields in order to make your task that bit more difficult.

Aiding you along the way and providing some much-needed comic relief are three of your fallen comrades, Helm, Gunnar,



and Bagman, who all live on as bio-chips inserted into your helmet, gun, and back-pack. Their comments can be seen along the top of the screen, as can your battle computer

Above: Just look at the size of those Vid-Tapes!



read out, which displays a map of the area along with Rogue's vital statistics and inventory. The exploratory element of the game is great, and the combat challenging, thanks to limited ammo and health. Thankfully, these can be replenished. Stand back, Norts! Rogue's coming through!



Colin

I really like this game, it's by no means perfect but keeps you interested and coming back for more. This is partly thanks to the Vid-Tapes spawning in different locations each time you load the game. The humour and remarks from your bio-chip buddies are great, and I love the dystopian setting. Graphics aren't bad, but the game does lack music and decent sfx. Well worth a play if you've never come across this title before.

CRITICISM

MR. WONG

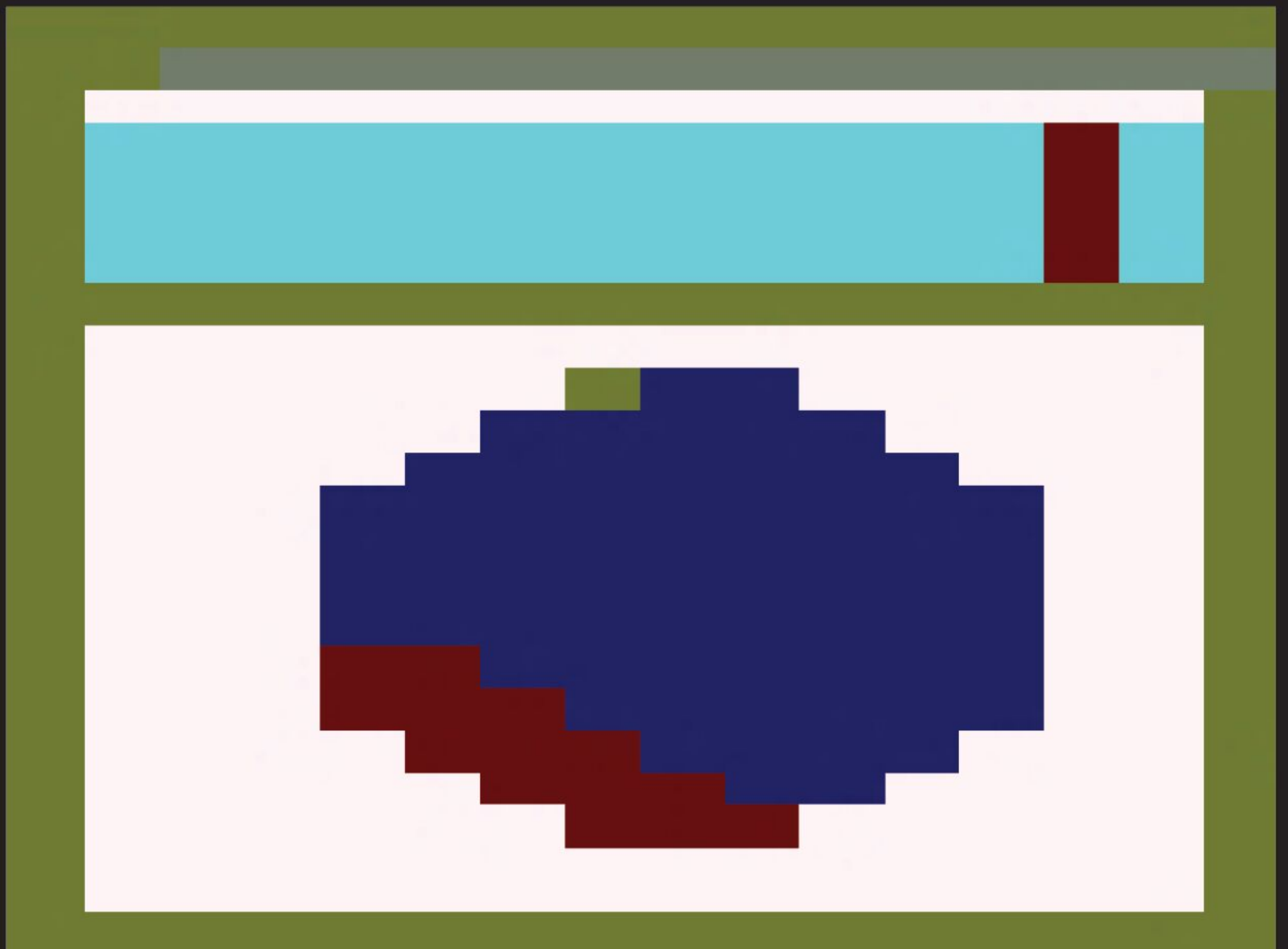
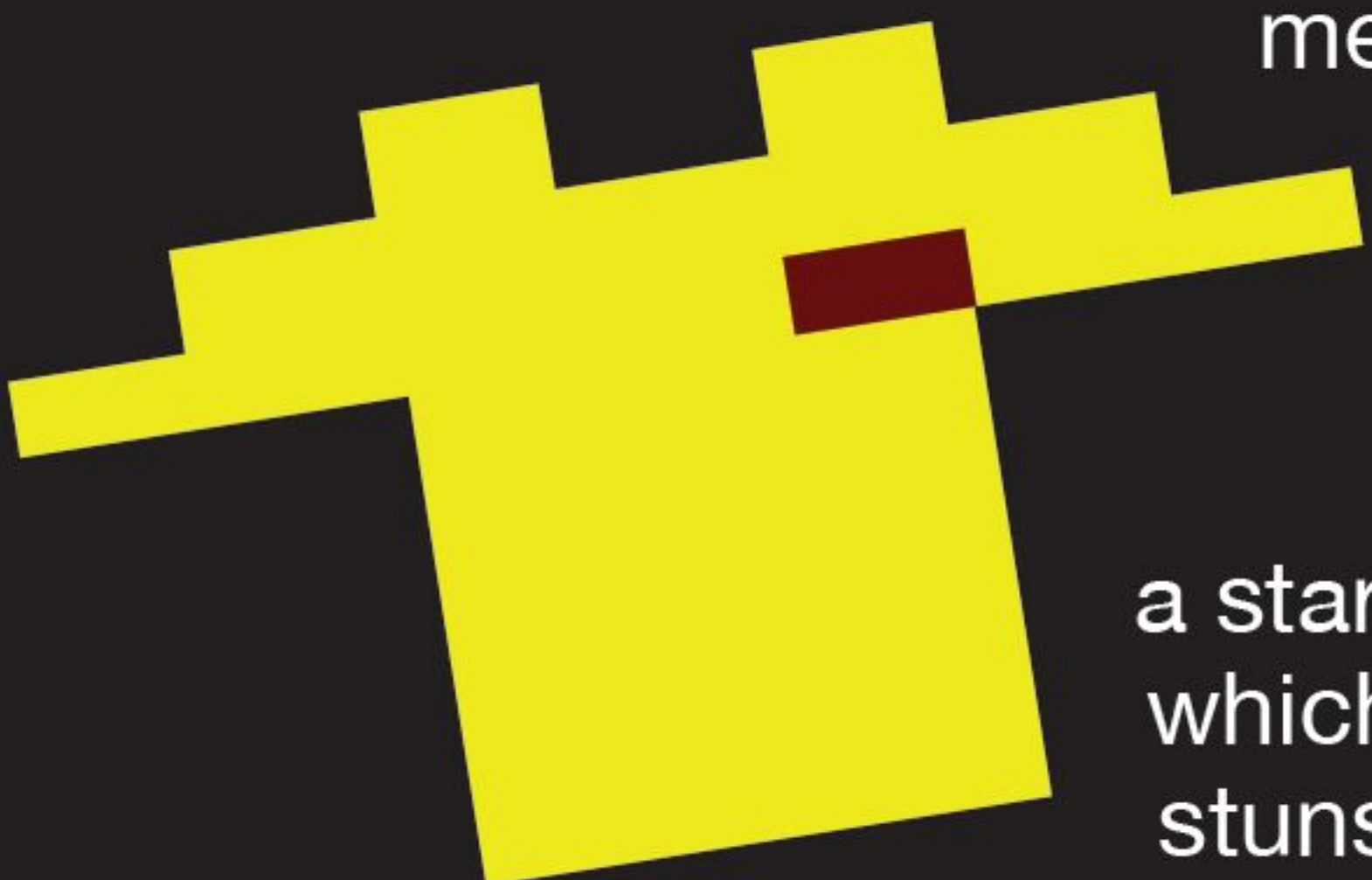


Author: **FitoSoft**

Released: **2023**

Mr. Wong's Loopy Laundry: a politically incorrect portrayal that encapsulates the stereotypes associated with a specific ethnic group's occupation. However, it's important to note that these were times of a different mindset, and while the world has progressed, traces of the past still linger. Originally released by Artic Software in 1984, this remake follows the adventures of Mr. Wong, the main character, attired in traditional paddy field clothing. His objective is to gather clothing items within the laundrette, all while evading the pursuit of soap bubbles, an iron, and a sack of laundry. Mr. Wong must navigate ladders and platforms to avoid these baddies and determine a secure path for collecting the numerous garments.

His primary means of defence comes in the form of a starch spray, which briefly stuns his adversaries.



Above: Collect the laundry, chuck it down the chute into the laundry basket and hey presto! Clean washing hanging on the line. Fun huh?

Gordon



CRITICISM

Fans of Burger Time-style games will be immediately familiar with the mechanics - it's a simple 'ladders and levels' bunkum that provides that quintessential arcade single-screen vibe. I appreciate the author loved the original as a kid, and I take no offence on the subject matter, but I wonder if there is a need to faithfully recreate such a game. Casting this aside, is there any improvement upon the original? It is pretty faithful, with a few subtle additions - there are animation frames to the baddies, and the laundry hangs on the line with each item you throw down the chute. The graphics are a bit less vibrant than the original and aren't as sharp. The path routines of the baddies are also questionable, as they seem to stick to going up and down the same ladder. The main difference is the complete lack of sound or music - that just dampens the game.



Colin



CRITICISM

I was always aware of Mr. Wong's Loopy Laundry but had never actually played it. So, I was sure to check out the original game first. I'll be honest, other than a few graphical changes to the main sprites, there's not much difference. The annoying flickering that the original suffered from has been removed, which is good, but there's not enough to keep you interested or coming back for more. Come on Fitosoft, you can do better than this!

Once he acquires the clothing items, he must dispatch them down the laundry chute located at the top of the screen, sending them to the basement below for washing. Handling other people's laundry is no walk in the park, and it definitely gets your hands sudsy!

PRESENTATION 50%

The world has moved on from this imagery.

GRAPHICS 52%

Better than the original in terms of animation frames, but not as colourful.

SOUND 0%

None whatsoever! Not even a sound effect. Disappointing.

ADDICTIVENESS 58%

It plays like a classic arcade game, albeit rather slowly.

LASTABILITY 45%

There are far better games for the Amstrad CPC.

OVERALL 41%

LIGHT CYCLE

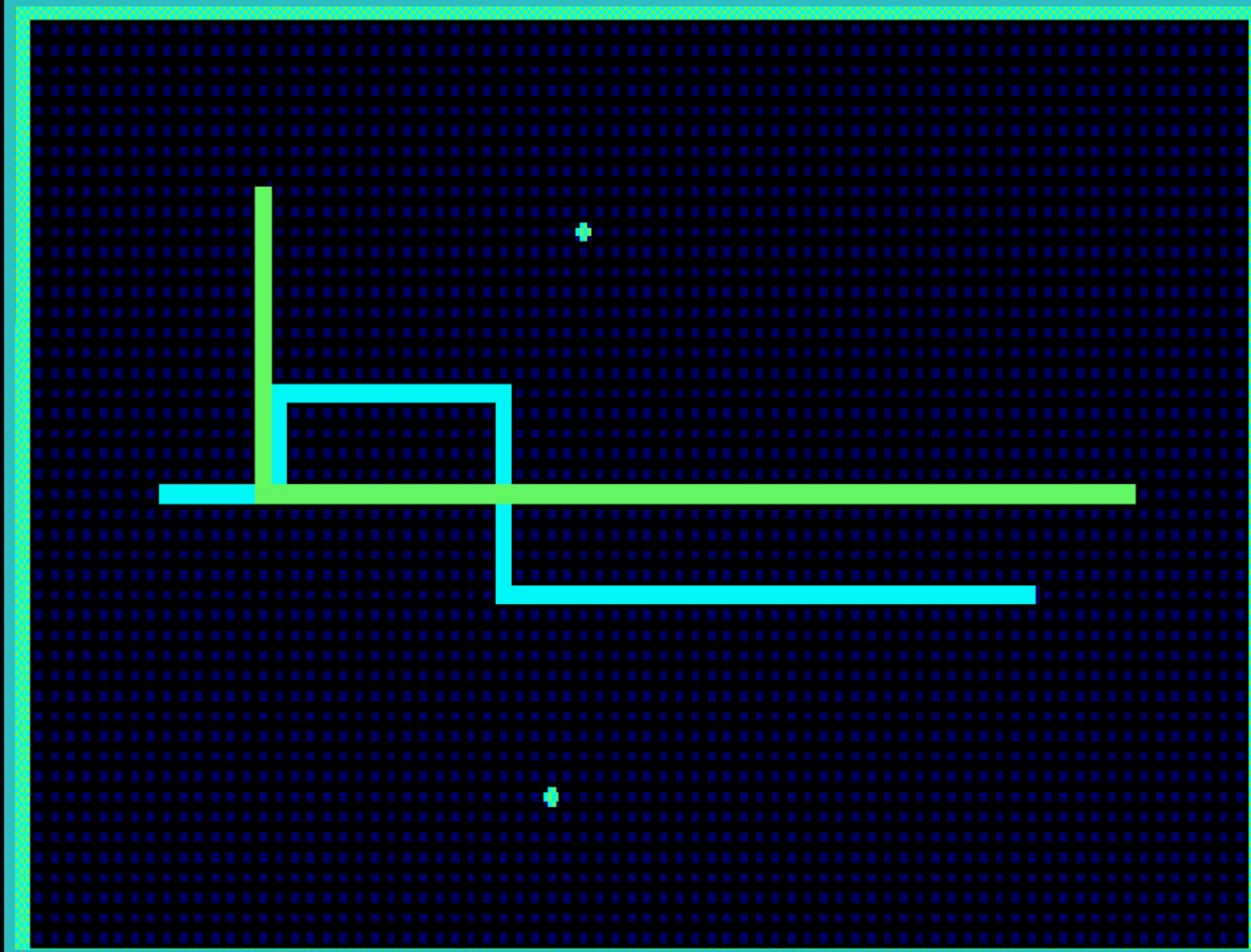


LUBLU ENTERTAINMENT!

Author: **Lublu Entertainment**

Released: **2023**

The origins of *Snake* go far back as the game *Blockade*, which appeared in our arcades in 1976 through Gremlin Industries. The gameplay has remained mostly unchanged all these years later and is still fondly remembered as a staple feature on the iconic Nokia 6110. However, there was a far better and more enjoyable variant of this game, and that was Disney's underrated *Tron*. Bally Midway's 1982 tie-in video game



license, specifically the *Light Cycle* section, will always be considered the

definitive 'Snake' game. Let's be honest - that was the best level in this arcade classic,

Gordon

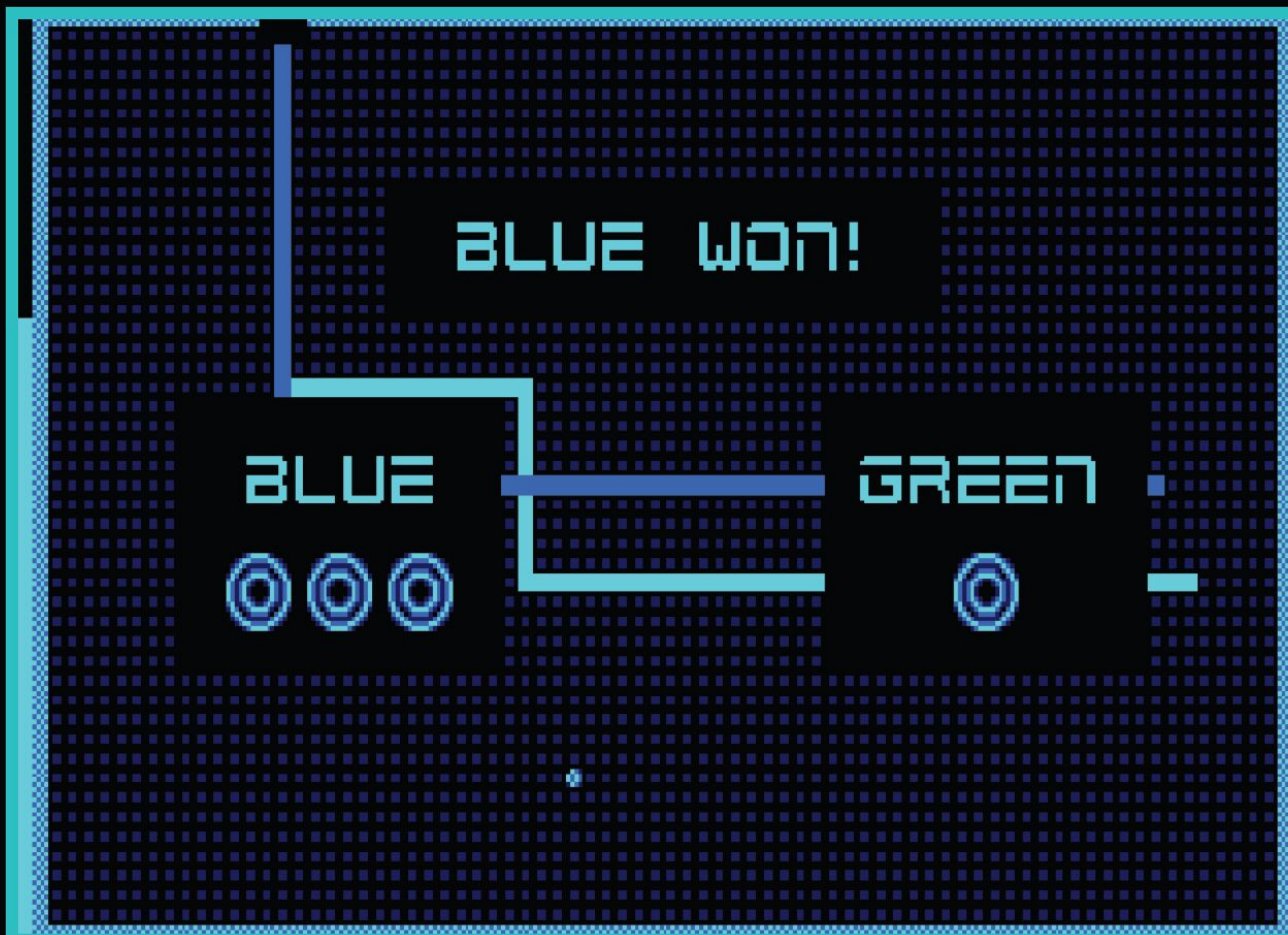


Light Grid delivers what it says on the tin and doesn't muck around too much with the tried-and-tested formula. The rivals begin the race facing each other, enticing a game of "Chicken" out of them. It has all the thrills that made the original arcade game fun and addictive. It visually looks good (as good as a game like this can get). Importantly - the gameplay is very tight, and the title music is a treat for the ears. It's a shame that there isn't a single-player feature, and perhaps some fresh ideas thrown in for longevity. As it stands, the game - as fun as it is to play - won't retain players in the long run.

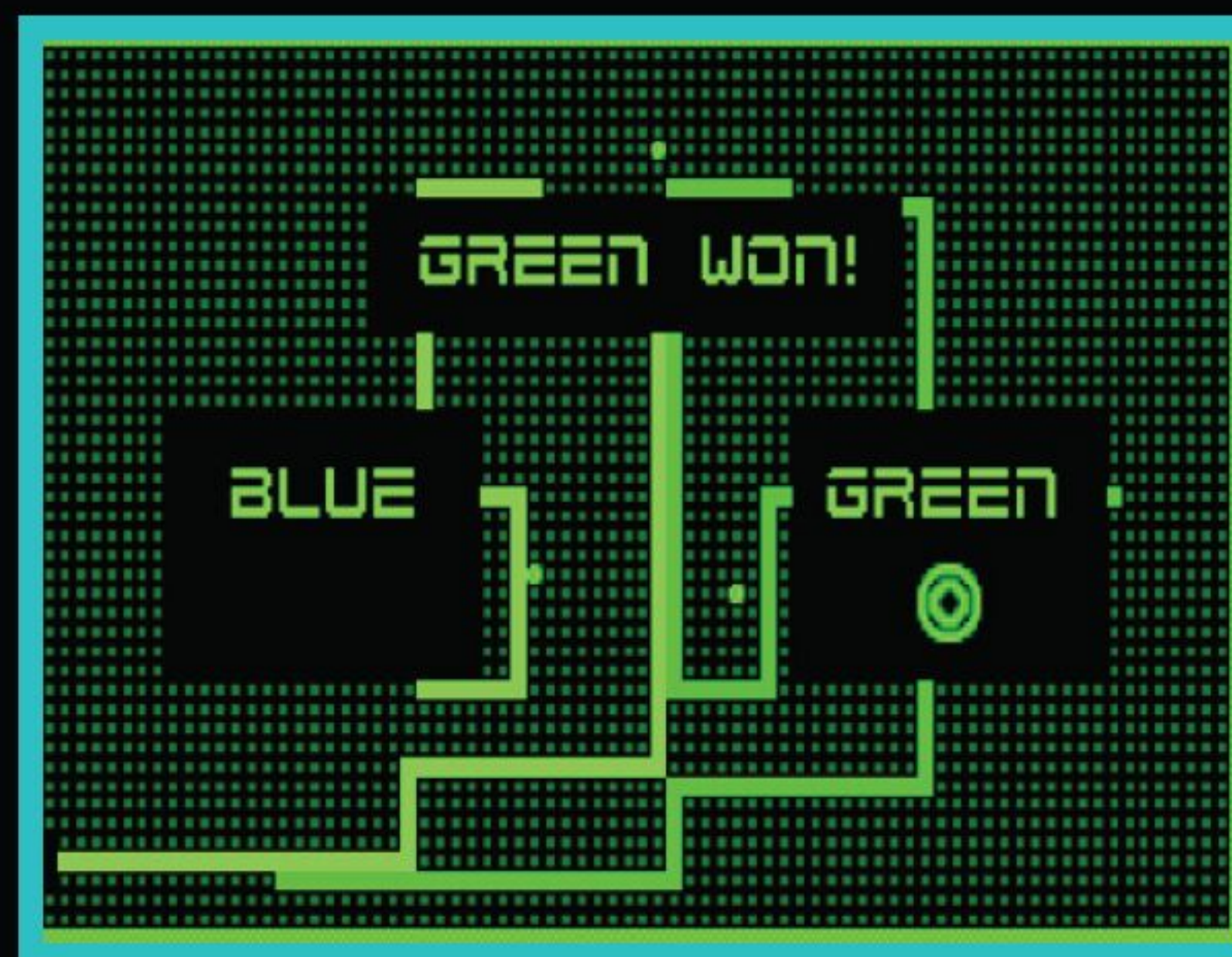
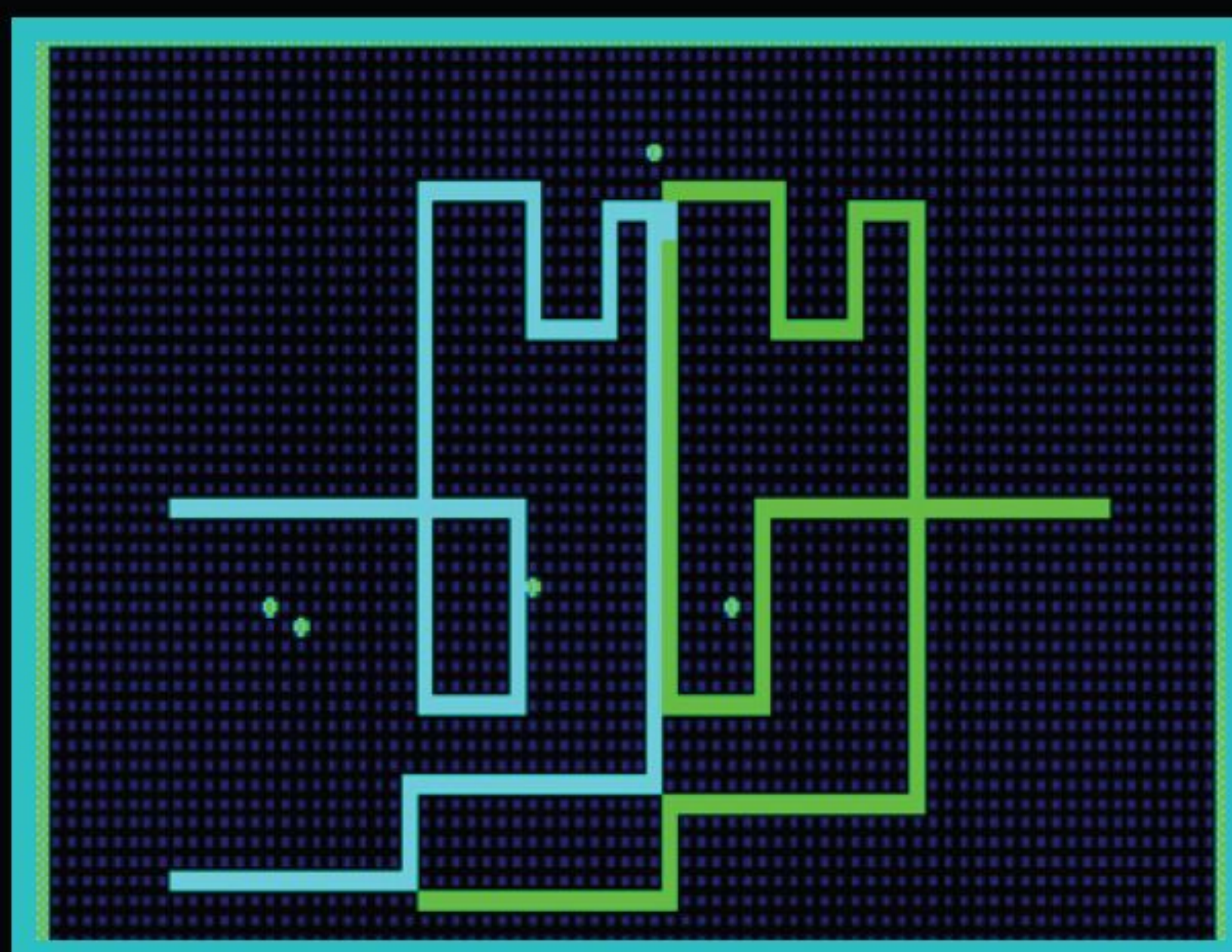
CRITICISM

and with that in mind, *Light Grid* focuses on this futuristic sports racer.

The game, sadly, is for two players only, with no option to race against the A.I. (which is very unTron-like). Instead of one life, however, each player has an energy bar, and the speed which you collide with a wall-of-light determines your energy depletion. Thankfully, much-needed energy boosts randomly appear, and upon collection, they may give an opponent an edge over their rival. So don your best er, light leathers, hop on your bike, and may the last cycle standing win!



Above: Primary colours rule, as Blue defeats their Green opponent.



Above: Revenge is sweet, as Green takes this round.

Colin



*I must admit I was pleasantly surprised with *Light Grid*, it's really good fun and really addictive. It took me and my mate back to the good old days of Amiga PD disk two-players, and we had a real blast playing it. It looks good, plays well, and sounds great. I do agree that there should be a single-player option implemented and perhaps some sort of bonuses or other riders to contend with. Not bad and worth a go.*

CRITICISM

PRESENTATION 70%

Lovely title screen with instructions, but no two-player mode.

GRAPHICS 62%

Aside from that title screen, it's square blocks the rest of the way

SOUND 70%

An excellent title tune and some superb in-game sounds.

ADDICTIVENESS 65%

Great fun for two players, but the omission of single-player kills it

LASTABILITY 60%

Sadly won't remain loaded for long, but worth a play nonetheless.

OVERALL 65%

Self confessed joystick addict and collector Colin Bell is back for some more waggle action as he takes another look back at some of the classic joysticks from yesteryear

Sadly, the days of popping along to your local John Menzies, Smiths, Virgin Gamestore, or Woolies to test out a new joystick are long gone, but there are still many second-hand and, in some cases, brand new 'old' joysticks to be found out there online and in retro gaming shops.

So, if you're in the market for a retro joystick for your old CPC, read on, and perhaps you might find something to your liking.

CHEETAH 125+

Manufacturer: Cheetah

Year of Release: 1986

Original RRP: £7.99

One of the most heavily marketed joysticks of the era, Cheetah's stalwart entry-level joystick, the 125+, is often seen as an 'old favourite' and adorned many a bedroom throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It may not have been as reliable or as durable as some of the other sticks around, but it was cheap and affordable.

Featuring the older type leaf switch assembly throughout, the 125+ still gives a decent level of responsiveness when played with. It is also nice and quiet, unlike many of its squeaky and creaky counterparts, allowing

you to concentrate during those crucial moments. Four fire buttons are present: one trigger, one thumb, and two on the main body. The main body buttons give a nice positive clicking sound, however, both the trigger and thumb buttons are somewhat spongy and less responsive.

The four suckers on the base allow for great stability when stuck to a flat surface making one-handed play a breeze, and despite the cheap-feeling case moulding, the stick and base offer a decent grip when held in either the left or right hand. The Autofire switch is

located to the front of the stick, which I personally find annoying.

Overall, a good, cheap entry-level stick that features great stability, good responsive movements, and fits well in the hands. It's certainly not the most durable or high-performance joystick on the market, but

with the Cheetah 125+, you get what you pay for. A stalwart classic!



QUICKSHOT V

Manufacturer: Quickshot

Year of Release: 1985

Original RRP: £11.99

Dubbed 'A Whole New Dimension in game play', the Quickshot V featured a pressure pad assembly, a good, contoured grip handle, a rather elongated base, and a "firing pad". Located on the main body, the firing pad is essentially a third fire button measuring a whopping 2 by 2 3/4 inches, clearly aimed at those with big egos who like to point out how their red button is bigger than yours! Another two fire buttons were present on the handle, one situated on top for your thumb, and one for your trigger finger, which was actually yellow instead of the usual red!

The contoured handle has a nice feel and provides good grip, but while the thumb and trigger fire buttons feel responsive and emit a satisfying clicking sound when pressed, the 'firing pad' feels

extremely light and unresponsive, squeaking each time when pressed. Four suckers were present on the base; however, due to the elongated main body, were spaced so far apart that the joystick slid around the tabletop while moving. This was a real shame, as this joystick is not designed to be

handheld. Once again, the pressure pad assembly feels a tad spongy and is awfully noisy when moving the handle.

Overall, a bit of a gimmick and would probably be best off



sent into another dimension rather than claiming to be a new dimension in gameplay. Still, I do kind of rather like that big fire button...

THE BUG

Manufacturer: Cheetah

Year of Release: 1990

Original RRP: £14.99

The Bug was Cheetah's first ergonomically designed joystick made specifically to fit in the palm of your hand.

With positive response micro switches throughout, these awesome little sticks featured that 'indestructible' steel shaft which glided effortlessly in whichever direction you moved it and then automatically centered when let go. The bug's big eyes are the stick's two fire buttons located towards the front of the main body, and are both responsive and within good reach of your index fingers. With contoured lines on the left, right, and front of the stick's main body, excellent

grip is ensured even when it comes to sweaty palm time.

Initially produced all in black, the Bug was later released in slime green as a limited edition and featured the angry red fire button eyes.

The Bug is a well-designed and well-thought-out stick that nestles comfortably in the palm of your hand. It oozes responsiveness and control, and I guarantee if you get one that you'll soon catch the Bug!



SUPERCHARGER

Manufacturer: Quickjoy

Year of Release: 1989

Original RRP: £12.99

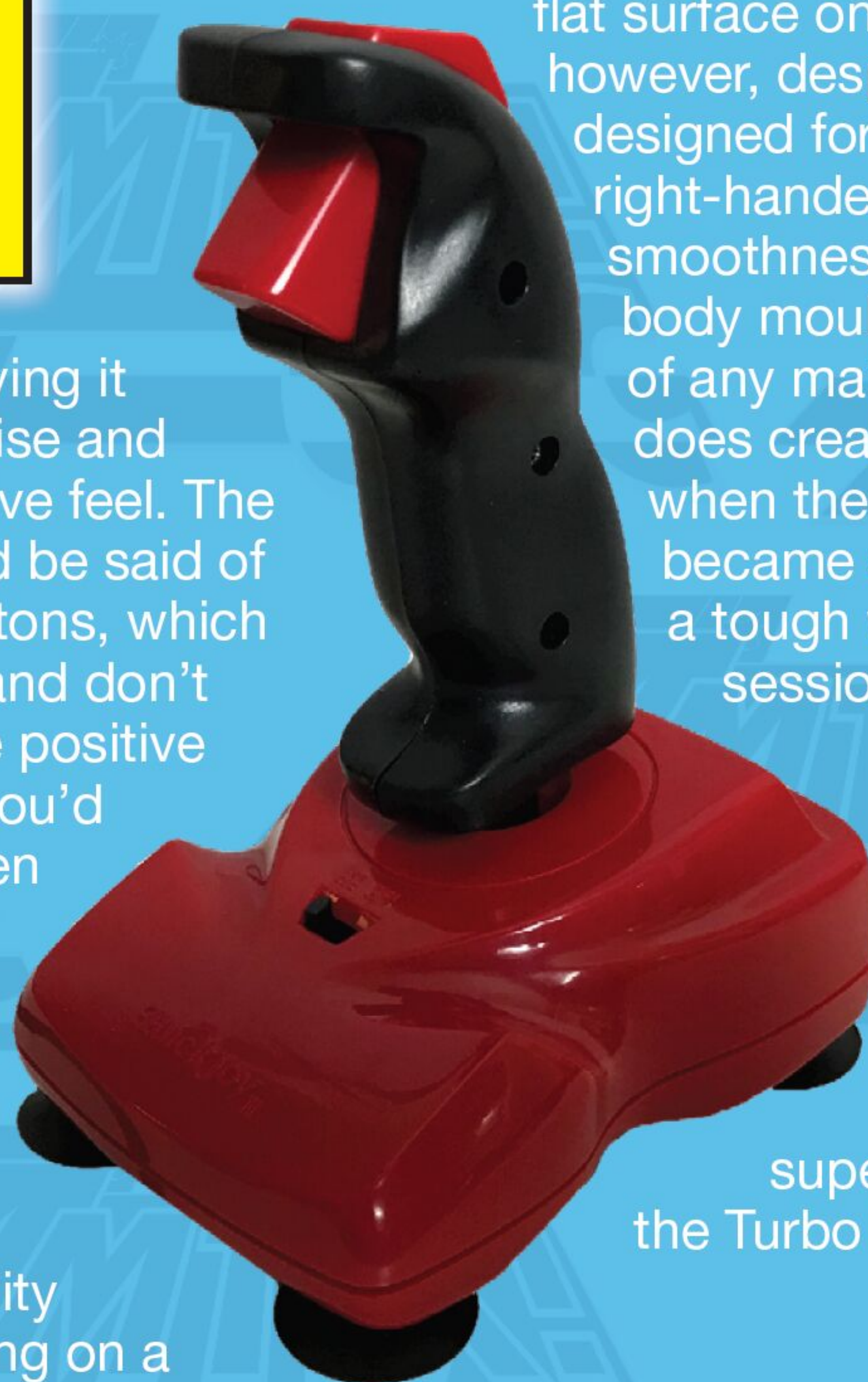
Quickjoy's answer to the superb Quickshot Turbo II, the Supercharger sadly falls somewhat short and fails to replicate the the Turbo II's high performance and style.

Featuring positive, although somewhat noisy microswitches throughout, and an Autofire switch, oddly positioned in front of the handle, the Supercharger feels cheap and leaves you feeling rather underwhelmed.

The oversized, unwieldy handle is uncomfortable and suffers from long travel when

moving, giving it a less precise and unresponsive feel. The same could be said of the fire buttons, which feel loose and don't provide the positive response you'd expect when pressed.

Four suckers on the base do allow for good stability when playing on a



flat surface one-handed, however, despite being designed for left and right-handed users, the smoothness of the main body moulding and lack of any main body grips does create an issue when the old palms became sweaty after a tough waggling session.

Tries to be a main contender but just can't quite compete with the superior athlete, the Turbo II.

COMPETITION PRO

Manufacturer: Leisuresoft Ltd

Year of Release: 1986

Original RRP: £15.96

Sold under a number of different names and styles over the years, the Competition Pro is an iconic arcade-style joystick which spanned both the 8-bit and 16-bit eras of gaming. Originally available with only a leaf switch assembly, the Competition Pro soon progressed onto the far more responsive microswitch assembly, or within its handle at least. Sadly, the two fire buttons, located at the front

and were always found to be rather weak feeling.

The arcade-style stick features short and precise travel, making it extremely accurate in terms of movement. Some later models of the Competition Pro also featured a switch that offered three separate firing modes, single shot, rapid burst, and continuous fire. No base suckers present

of the main body, never quite got the same microswitch treatment

here, and while it can be used on a flat surface, it feels far more at home in your hand.

Old Faithful, and still a firm favourite amongst many joystick users the world over.



DELTA 2000

Manufacturer: Product 2000 Ltd.

Year of Release: 1986

Original RRP: £9.99

The Delta 2000 claims to be a “De Luxe Micro Switch Joystick” with “cushion directional control”. It features an Autofire switch along with two fire buttons, one on the main body, and another large thumbstick button on top of the handle.

The handle itself features a visible steel shaft, no doubt indestructible, and feels good to hold. No fancy contoured grip designs

here! When moving, what is immediately noticeable is the cushioned directional control, and when you move the stick around it feels like it’s being caught in all directions by a mass of fluffy pillows. The Delta 2000 also features a specially designed “mechanism” (they won’t tell you what it is) which auto centres the handle when let go. One issue,

however, is that the stick does rotate when moving, which I found rather annoying.

The Delta 2000 also suffers from an awkward shaped main body and although it features three suckers on the base, two to the rear and one to the front, the stick slides around as if it were on an ice rink.

Very middle-

of-the-road this one. Good if you like that classic arcade feel, but if you’re looking for precision, you’d best stick something more modern in your hand.



QJ SUPERSTAR

Manufacturer: Quickjoy

Year of Release: 1991

RRP: £14.99

The Super Star was one of several transparent offerings from Quickjoy, who released a whole series, and you know what, it isn’t half bad!

As well as a transparent case, we were treated to a vibrant orange internal trim and a good-sized ball on top which had a nice little recess for your thumb to rest in. The obligatory

‘indestructible’ steel shaft is present and visible, along with two grey fire buttons which were well placed in a nice diagonal slant to the left of the main body. The main stick uses top-quality responsive micro switches and feels precise when moving. Sadly, the fire buttons use the older leaf switch type

of connection, making them slightly less responsive. An Autofire switch is also present next to the fire buttons, and a CPC 464 switch for compatibility with the Amstrad range.

The Superstar is designed with the right-handed user in mind and is ideally suited to flat surfaces, which is not a problem as the base comes with five strong suction cups attached. The stick doesn’t sit or operate well held in the hands.

Not a bad effort at all by Quickjoy, the Super Star is a really good solid stick and feels extremely well made and built to last. It is easy to control and plays like a good arcade stick should.





Author: **Geco & Toto**
Released: **2023**

Renegade may well be the greatest beat-'em-up game on the CPC, so a remake that brings in proper horizontal scrolling and the ability to change the blood from blue to red is very much welcome. Geco and Toto have enhanced the classic for 128K machines and breathed new life into it as they went. Sorry

unexpanded 464/664 owners, you'll have to stick with the original, but don't worry, it works flawlessly on emulators.

You play a street brawler who needs to murder every member of four different street gangs in order to rescue

his girlfriend. This is very different to the Japanese arcade original, where Kunio needs to beat up bullies to stop them targeting his friend. In both games, it's intense street fighting action all the way, however.

Renegade Reloaded

improves on the original by moving the keyboard controls to something more logical. In the original, playing for a long time had a tendency to give you finger cramps, but here, the buttons are moved to Z, X, and C. So much more logical!



Above: Back off punk! Let the brawling begin as you take on the bad guys down in the subway, the must go to 80s setting for a fight.

Review by Zoë Kirk-Robinson



Zoë



CRITICISM

I played Renegade so much as a kid that I worried my Hit Squad cassette was going to wear out. Finally beating the game after months of intense practice felt like a coming-of-age event. So playing this revamp has felt like going back in time. Renegade Reloaded plays like my memory of Renegade feels: seamless, intense, and an overall wonderful experience. The remapped controls alone are worth downloading the game, and the smooth scrolling is just wonderful. Mapping the ability to turn cheats on/off to the function keys is a stroke of genius, and the whole experience feels like a labour of love. This is a masterpiece. Anyone wanting to remake an old game should take a look at how Geco and Toto approached Renegade. This is how you do it.

Also, if you're one of those people (like me) who couldn't beat Big Bertha until you'd put in six months of intense training, you'll be very happy to find that you can just press F2 and become invulnerable. Don't let the power go to your head, though.

All the original levels are here in all their glory, and the music is just as good as ever. The scrolling is pixel-perfect and feels so right that



Gordon



CRITICISM

The original release for the Amstrad CPC was excellent, with brilliant visuals and incredible music. The only thing that slightly marred it was the fiddly control/fight keyboard combinations. Once you mastered them, it worked well, but it did take some getting used to. With this redux edition, it's far more accessible due to the 3-button approach for the fight moves. There is the addition of run moves as well, which is a game-changer. It's also much better to see the scrolling happening on the levels instead of the flick screen approach. This is now the definitive 8-bit go-to version - no doubt. We have a great game evolved here - Well done to Geco & Toto for this masterpiece!



Above: Bikers in hockey masks! This game has it all!

it's hard to go back to the original game after you've experienced it. This is the kind of revamp that eclipses the original in so many ways that you'll wonder how you ever did without it.

Control is silky smooth, and all the new animations slip seamlessly into the originals in a way that you'll be shocked to hear there are extra animations. This is a perfect enhancement of a near-perfect game. Get it, play it, love it. You will not regret it.



PRESENTATION 100%

Utterly Amazing! There is genuinely nothing to fault.

GRAPHICS 95%

Bold, colourful and detailed. A joy to look at.

SOUND 90%

The music is fantastic, the only downside is punches & kicks sound the same.

ADDICTIVENESS 95%

You can come back to this game for another play forever...

LASTABILITY 95%

... and you probably will because it's fantastic.

**OVERALL
95%**



Well met, travellers, welcome to the AMTIXCPC Tavern nestled at the crossroads between AMTIX Towers and the long and winding road that leads to CPC adventure.

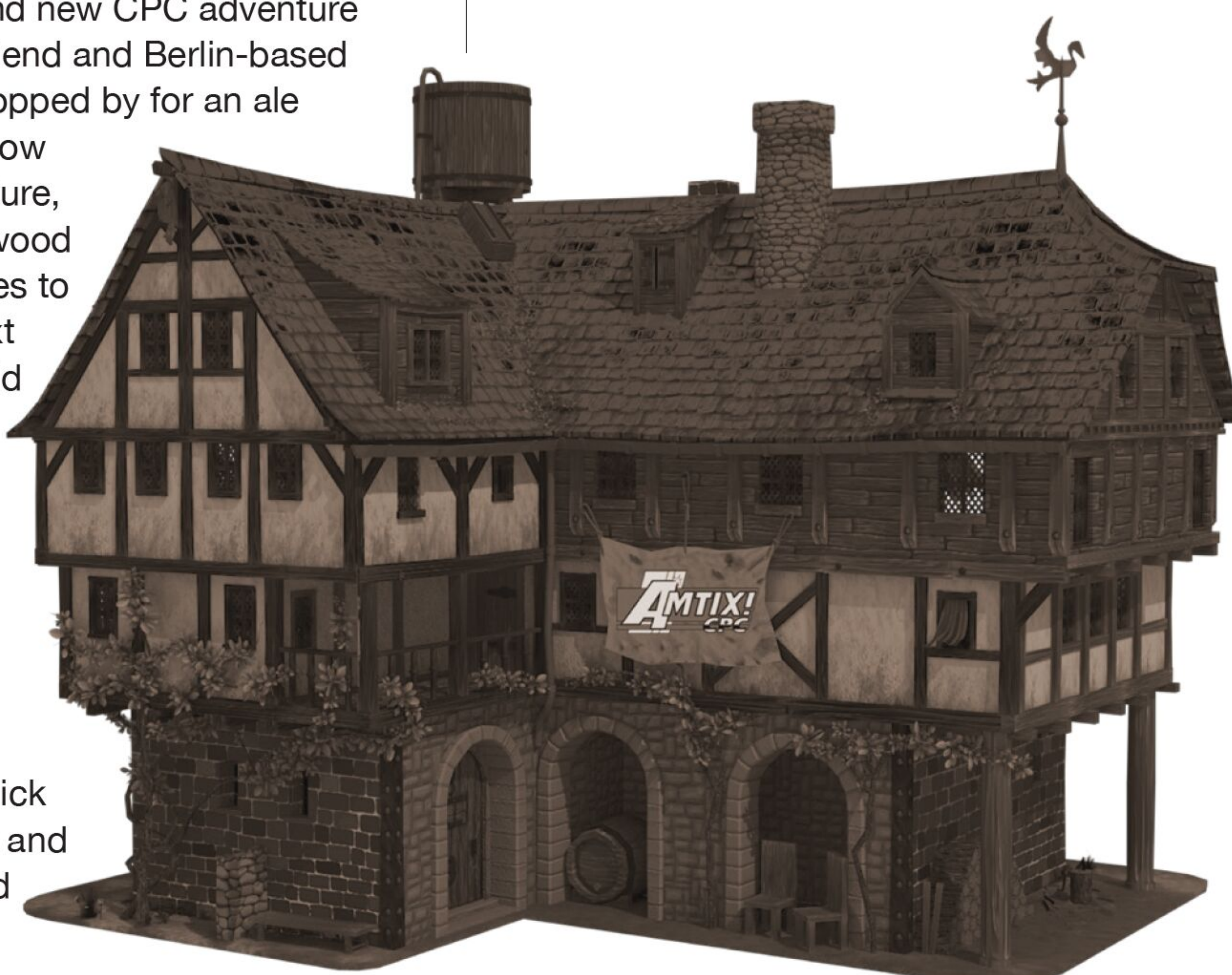
Come in and rest your weary typing fingers and help yourself to one of our fine libations that we have on offer. The 'Zilog' ale is particularly good at this time of year. Being a busy tavern, we get all sorts passing through, and as such, I get to hear rumours and talk of many upcoming and new CPC adventure releases. Our good friend and Berlin-based author Stefan Vogt popped by for an ale recently and let us know about his new adventure, *The Ghosts of Blackwood Manor*, which promises to be a spooktacular text adventure set in an old haunted mansion house. More on that in the news section.

For the review this issue, I'll be taking a look at Altanerus Dog's new adventure offering, *Dekay*, a point-and-click style adventure set in and around an abandoned

mining complex.

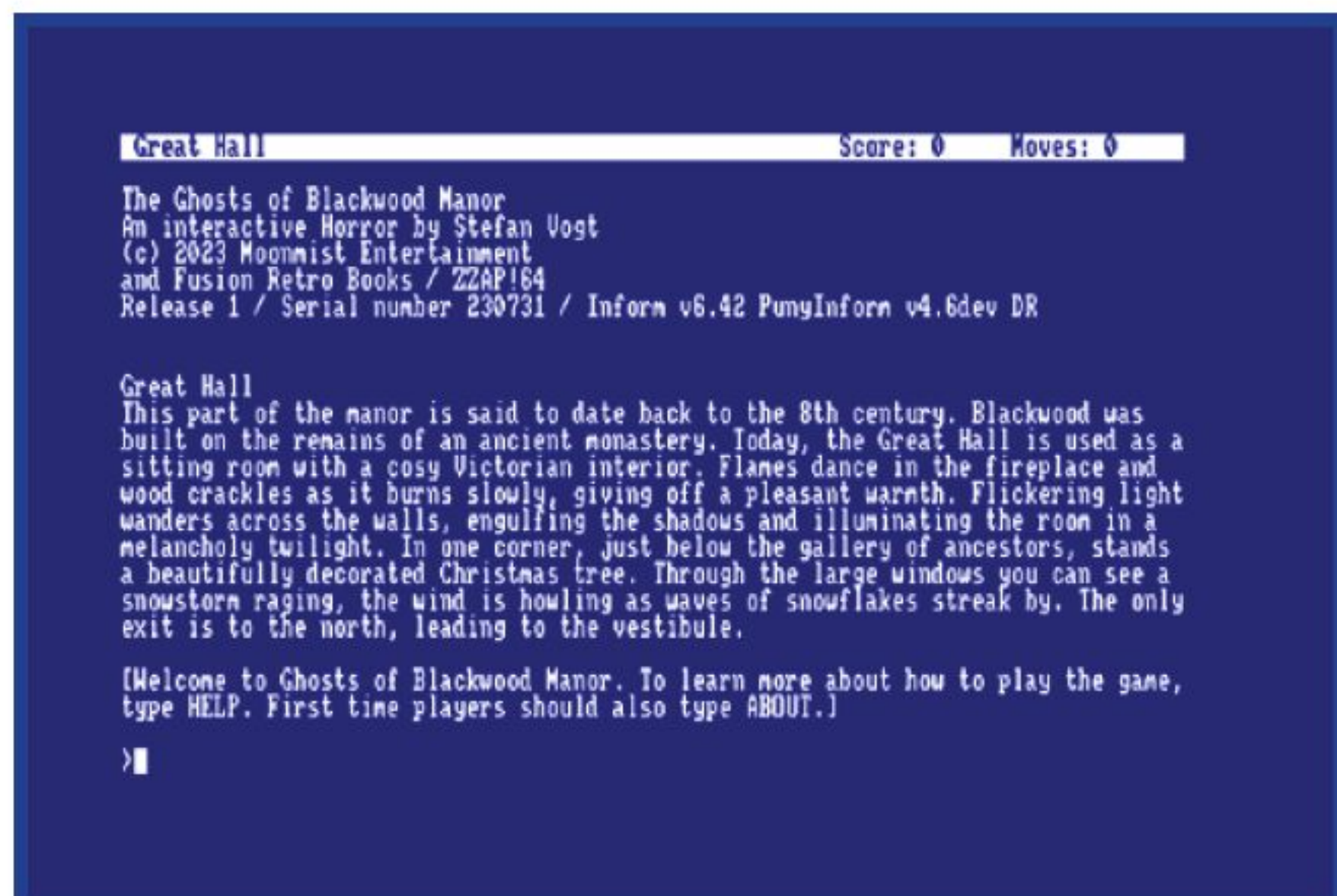
And now, my weary travellers, with our proceedings concluded, it's time to raise that tankard of your favourite tipples, sit back, relax, and enjoy this month's CPC adventure news and reviews.

Got anything adventure related to share? Working on or developing your own adventure game? Contact the Tavern via amtixcpc@gmail.com



tavern news

THE GHOSTS OF BLACKWOOD MANOR - NEW TEXT ADVENTURE BY STEFAN VOGT - COMING SOON!



erlin-based
adventure
author Stefan
Vogt swung by
the Tavern the
other day to give
us an update

on his new text adventure, *The Ghosts of Blackwood Manor*. The story of the game is as follows: “You are a well-known author and are working on your

next novella. A great aunt you don’t know much about, who lived a very secluded life, has left you a historic Scottish manor house. A few days before Christmas, you move in with your wife and son. On Christmas Eve, strange things happen that lead you on the trail of a centuries-old, dark secret”.

The game runs in Vezza, a new interpreter that Stefan’s friend helped create, and is presented in Z5, which is Infocom’s advanced format. Stefan explains, “The original Infocom interpreter on CPC was never capable of running this advanced format, which allows much bigger and more

sophisticated stories. So Vezza is the first interpreter that allows running the advanced format on an unmodified CPC. Vezza also makes use of the CPC’s full 128k memory. Infocom’s interpreter and all the other interpreters out there only make use of 64k, which means the game performs super fast even though it is a huge story file in terms of content”.

With previous high-quality titles such as *Hibernated 1* and *The Curse of Rabenstein*, I’m sure that this new adventure will be one to watch out for, and I’ll bring you all a full review once released.

tavern reviews

DEKAY

AUTHOR: ALTANERUS DOG

RELEASED: 2023



Altanerus Dog aka Antero Martinez is a relative newcomer on the CPC scene. He has produced a number

of games over the last year or so, some of which you’ll have seen reviewed here in this very publication. *Dekay* is his first foray into the world of adventure games, so I thought I’d give it a try. Styled in the format of a point-and-click adventure *Dekay* is set in and

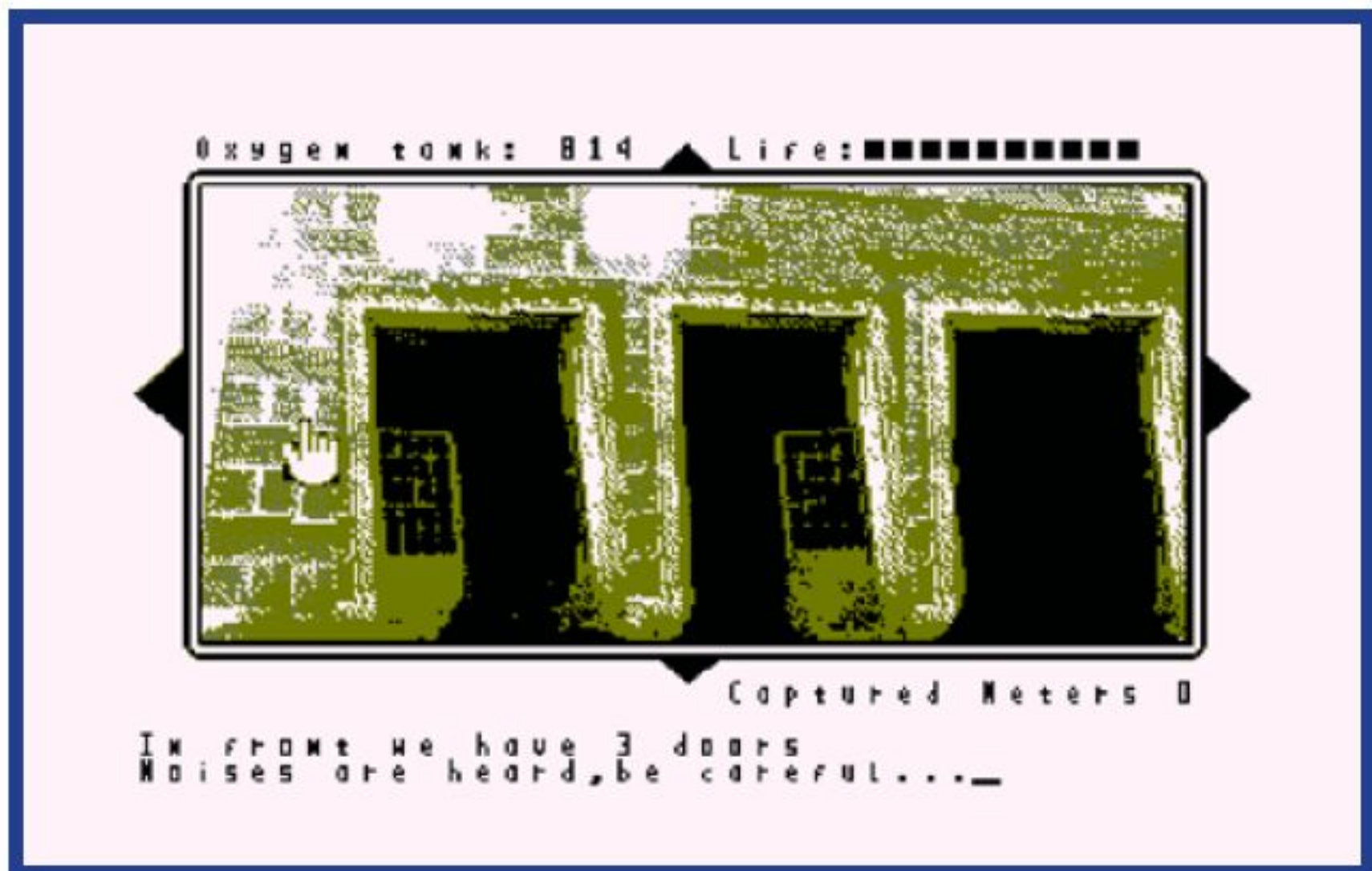


around an old mining facility in South Africa. Something has gone wrong, and all contact with the mine has been lost. Despite attempts to establish what had happened by special forces teams who deployed drones into the facility, they, too, have now vanished. Now it's up to you to enter the quarantine zone, locate the missing particle meters left by the first special forces teams, and get out alive.

Starting the game, which can be controlled with keys, joystick, or even an AMX mouse, you land via helicopter into the quarantined mining facility. On the screen along the top, you can see your life meter and oxygen tank reading which immediately starts to count down, so best get moving! In the middle is a digitised Mode 1 image, which the developer says are all from real places. Below is the description of the room, and to the sides, top, and bottom are black directional arrows. A small hand cursor is also present on screen, and is controlled by the player. The hand cursor lets you choose your direction by clicking on one of the arrows or interacting with something on the image. As you move from screen to screen, you'll be told that you can hear noises. Linger too long, and you'll get a message telling you someone or something is coming your



Above: Searching the abandoned rooms for the lost particle meters. Digitised pictures converted to the CPC add a touch of realism to the game.



Above: Yikes! Linger too long or take the wrong route and you'll run into this chap.

way. These are zombies, like the one just above, who enjoy nothing more than taking a good bite out of you and reducing your life bar. Some directions can lead to a nasty fall, which also reduces your life. Once your life bar is depleted, the game is over.

Dekay is the first part in what the Altanerus promises to be a

series of episodic adventures. Part 1 is very short and easy to complete after a few tries, and while there isn't much in the way of puzzles, it still feels like a point-and-click adventure, albeit a very simple one.

Graphically, the Mode 1 graphics are good, and the fact that all the images are of real places is a nice added touch. There is a decent soundtrack that plays along with the game, and it does well to complement the eerie atmosphere of the game's setting. You can't help but feel creeped out when the screen displays the message that you hear noises and when you run into one of the zombies.

Short but sweet, although I must admit, I'm looking forward to the next episode of *Dekay* already. Great work by Altanerus.

atmosphere:	69%
interaction:	55%
Lasting interest:	50%
presentation:	58%

overall 58%



Targets ZX Spectrum,
ZX Spectrum NEXT and HTML

<https://adventuron.io>





4MTIX!

CPC





BATMAN

For our second 'Flash Back' this issue, Colin Bell dons his cowl and fires up the Batmobile as he looks back at one of Ocean Software's most memorable movie conversions. We are, of course, talking about *Batman: The Movie*.

I absolutely loved this film as a kid, and the movie tie-in by Ocean Software was no exception. From the moment I loaded it up on Christmas Day 1990, I was completely blown away by the colourful, detailed graphics and varied level of gameplay. The first and final levels are classic 2D side-scrolling platformers with the added benefit of being able to swing from platform to platform utilizing Batman's Batrope. This was a fantastic feature that I'd never seen before and one that brought a much-needed breath of fresh air to the otherwise bog-standard platformer.

The second and fourth levels let you get behind the controls of the Batmobile and Batwing, which both feature fast-paced smooth scrolling action through the streets

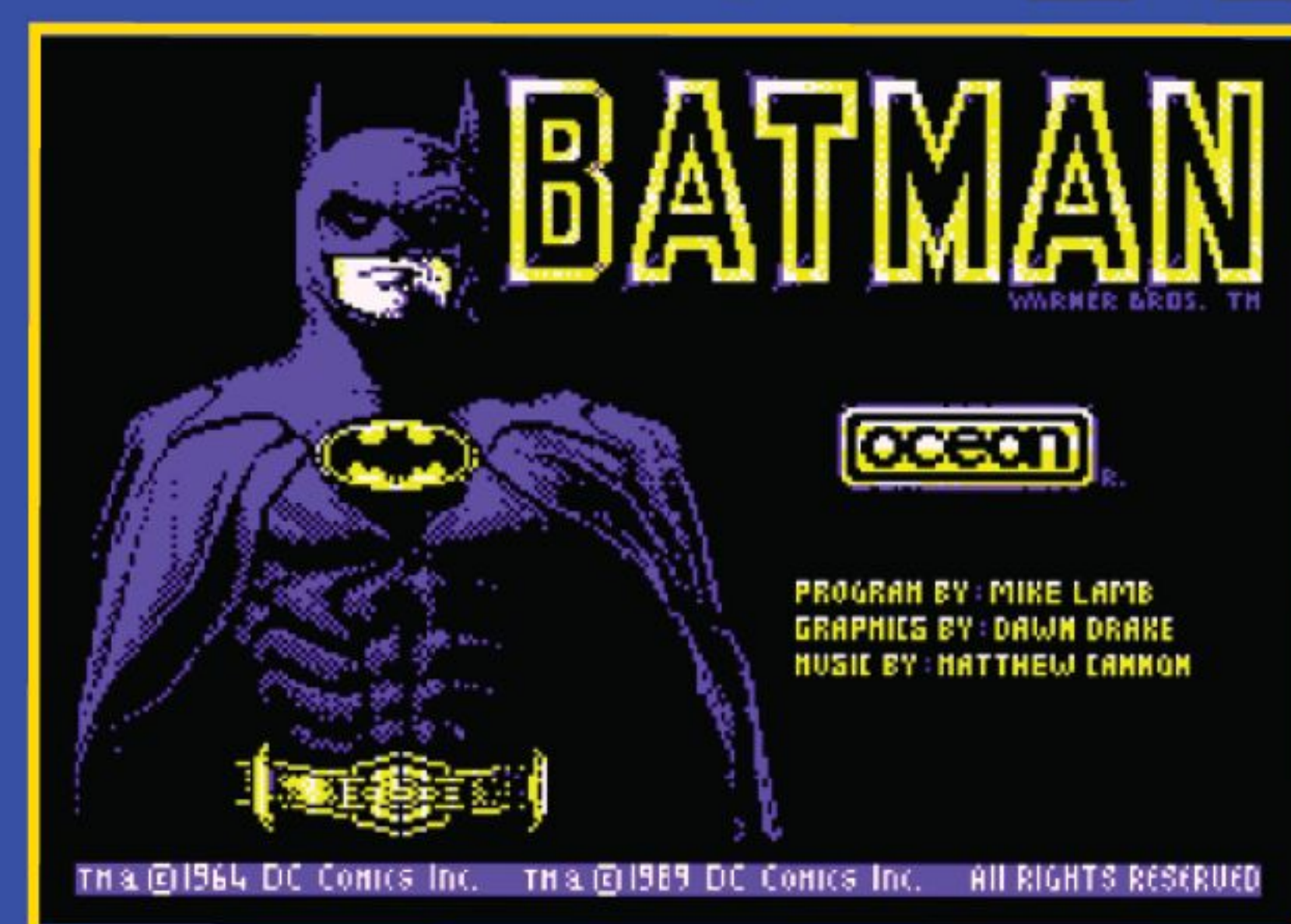


of Gotham: first through the busy rush hour as you attempt to get back to the Batcave and then in the skies as you try to destroy the Joker's deadly Smilex gas-filled balloons. The third and possibly simplest level is puzzle-based, and sees you trying to pick the correct combination of products to



crack the Joker's Smilex gas recipe.

Ocean really did a great job, and the game follows the movie's plot rather well. The varied level gameplay keeps you interested, and it plays just as well as it looks. A game I can happily return to time and again.



Left: Holy free bat sticker Batman! Free with every copy of the Big Box version.



Above: Take to the streets in the mighty Batmobile. Avoid the rush hour traffic and the Joker's goons in a bid to get back to the Batcave.

Colin



Many Ocean fans feel that *Robocop* is the best movie conversion they made, but for me, it's *Batman: The Movie*. Its combination of platform action, driving, and puzzle solving makes for a great game. I adore the Batrope feature and the ability it brings, allowing you to explore places out of reach. The music is good and varied, and the graphics are great, making good use of the CPC's colour palette. No lazy port here! Ocean's finest CPC hour, in my humble opinion.

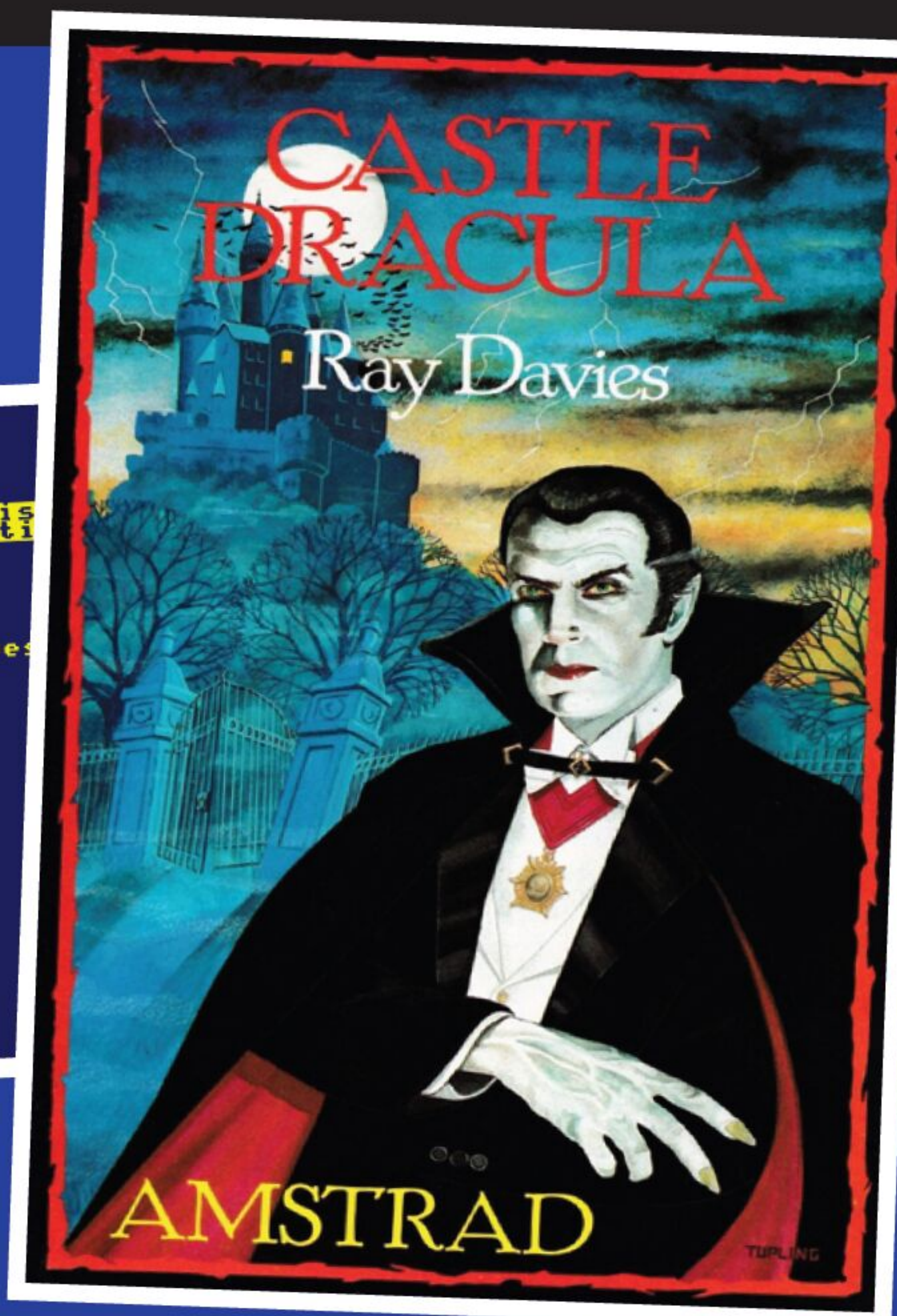
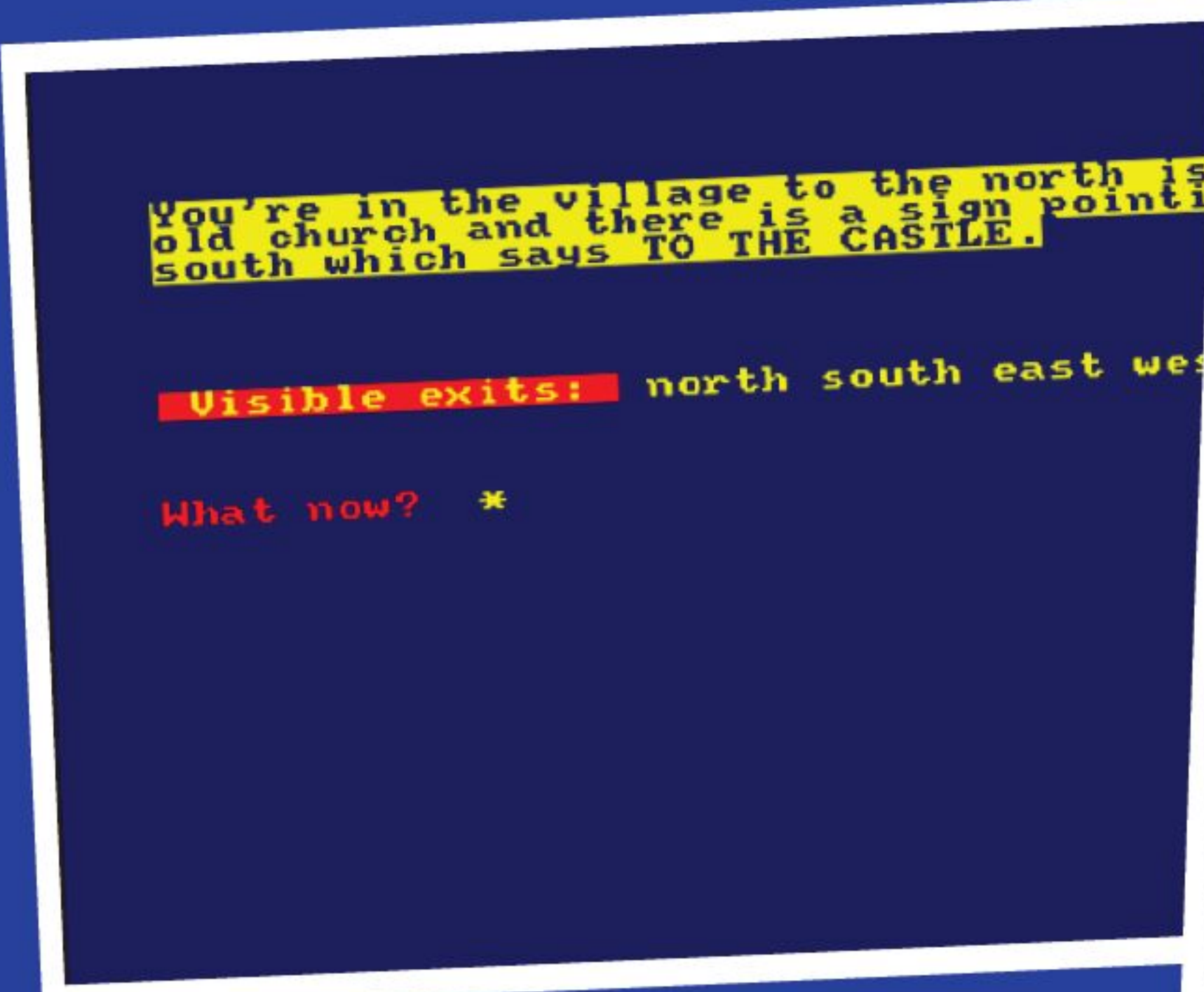
CRITICISM

In the latest of this regular series, Graeme Mason looks back at six more of his favourite Amstrad CPC game covers from a particular year. In this issue, we're off to the year 1985.



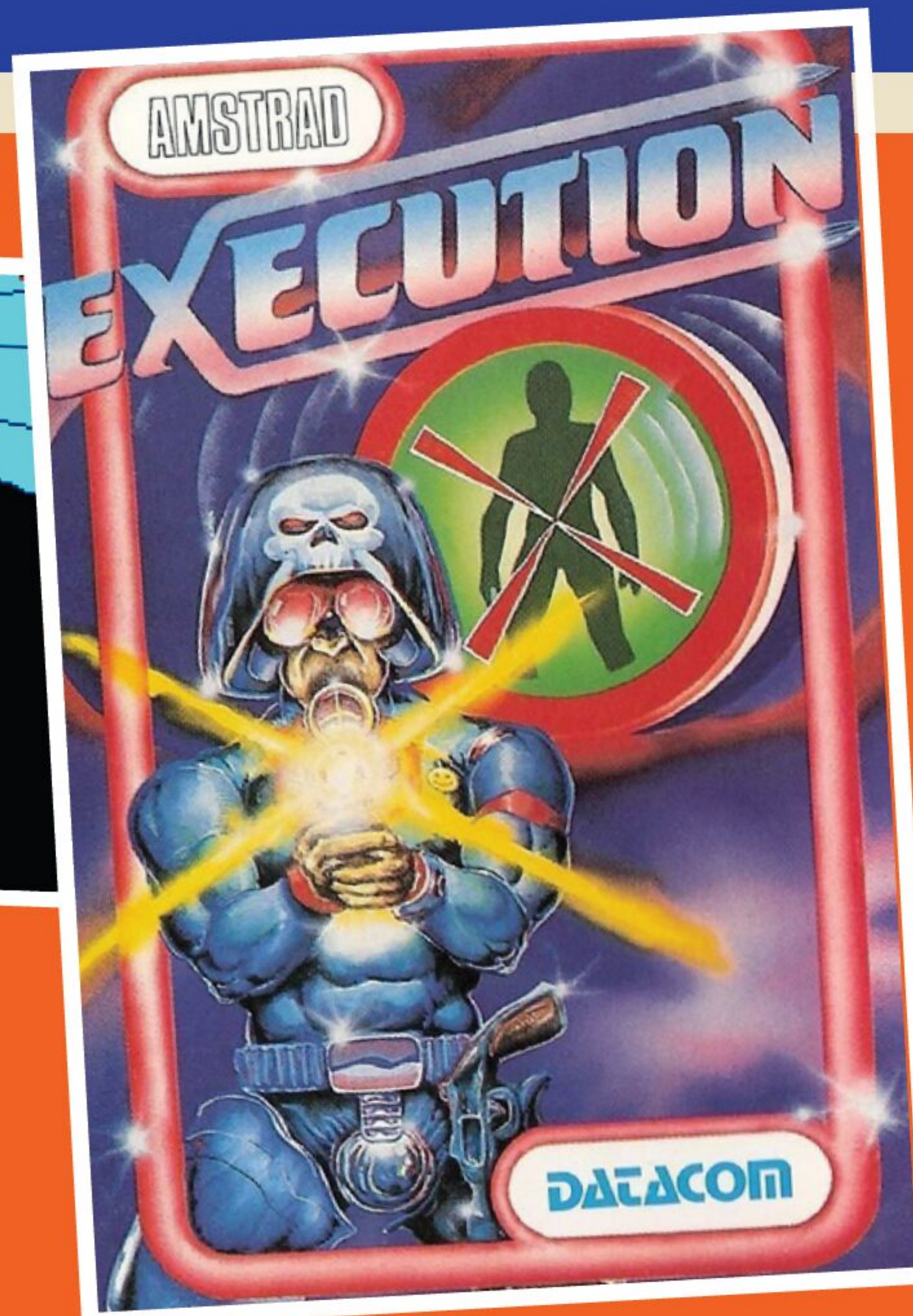
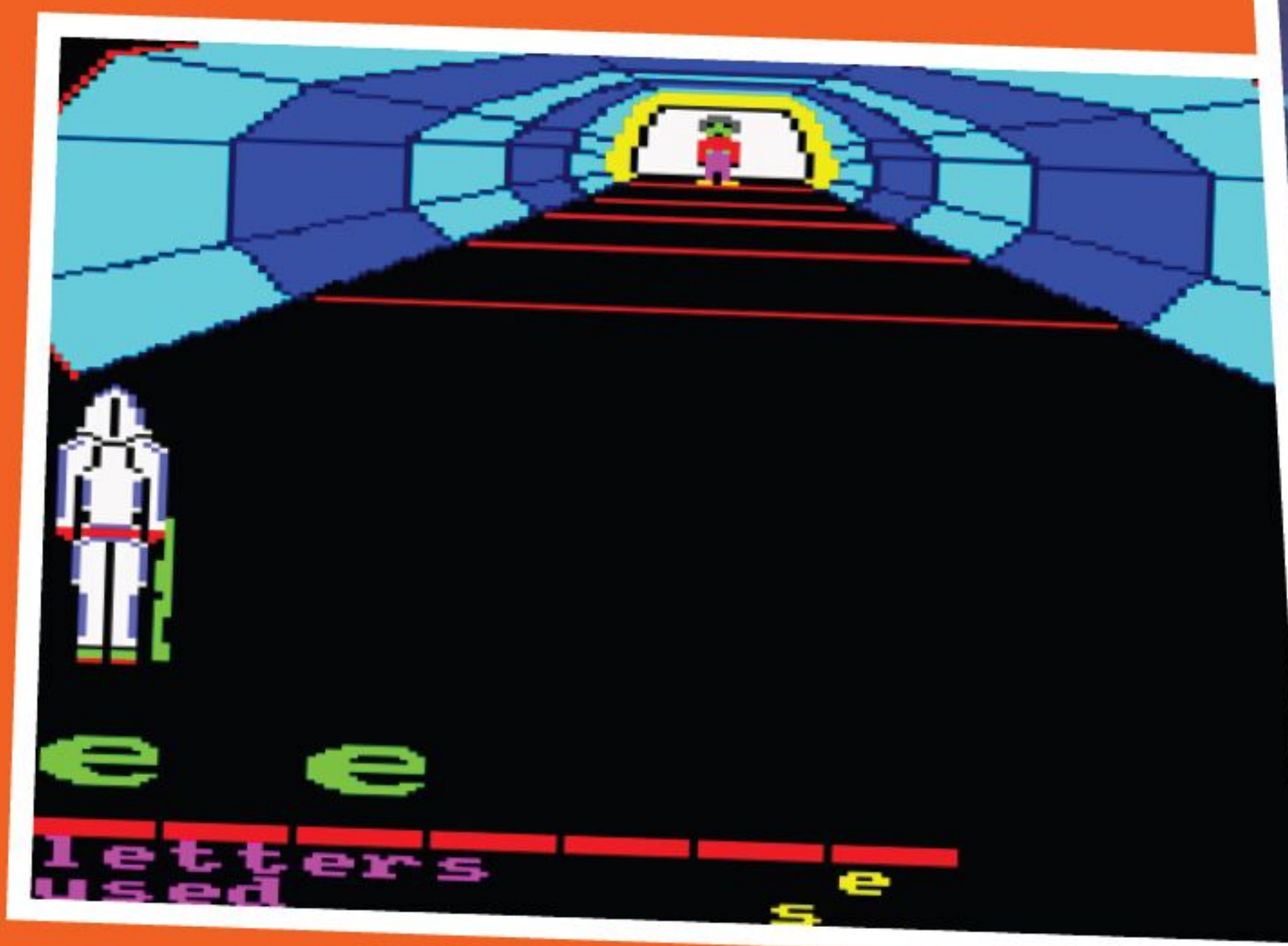
Game: Castle Dracula Publisher: Ducksoft

Adventure games hadn't entirely died out commercially in 1985, so releases like this persisted. Based on the legend of the famous bloodsucker, this game was created by The Kinks' Ray Davies (hilarious – Ed) and gives the player the difficult task of killing its titular vampire. Or, as the back cover 'amusingly' puts it, 'serve His Putrescence a well prepared stake'. Starting in a deserted village overshadowed by Dracula's abode, the front cover inevitably features the pointy spires of the castle, a flock of bats curling around its eastern reaches. The artist has done a fantastic job with a moody sky here: the gentle orange of the sun giving way to the darker, foreboding hue of night. But best of all is Drac himself, an austere, almost regal figure that reminds me of Vincent Price's performance as the great Prince of Darkness.



Game: Execution Publisher: Datacom

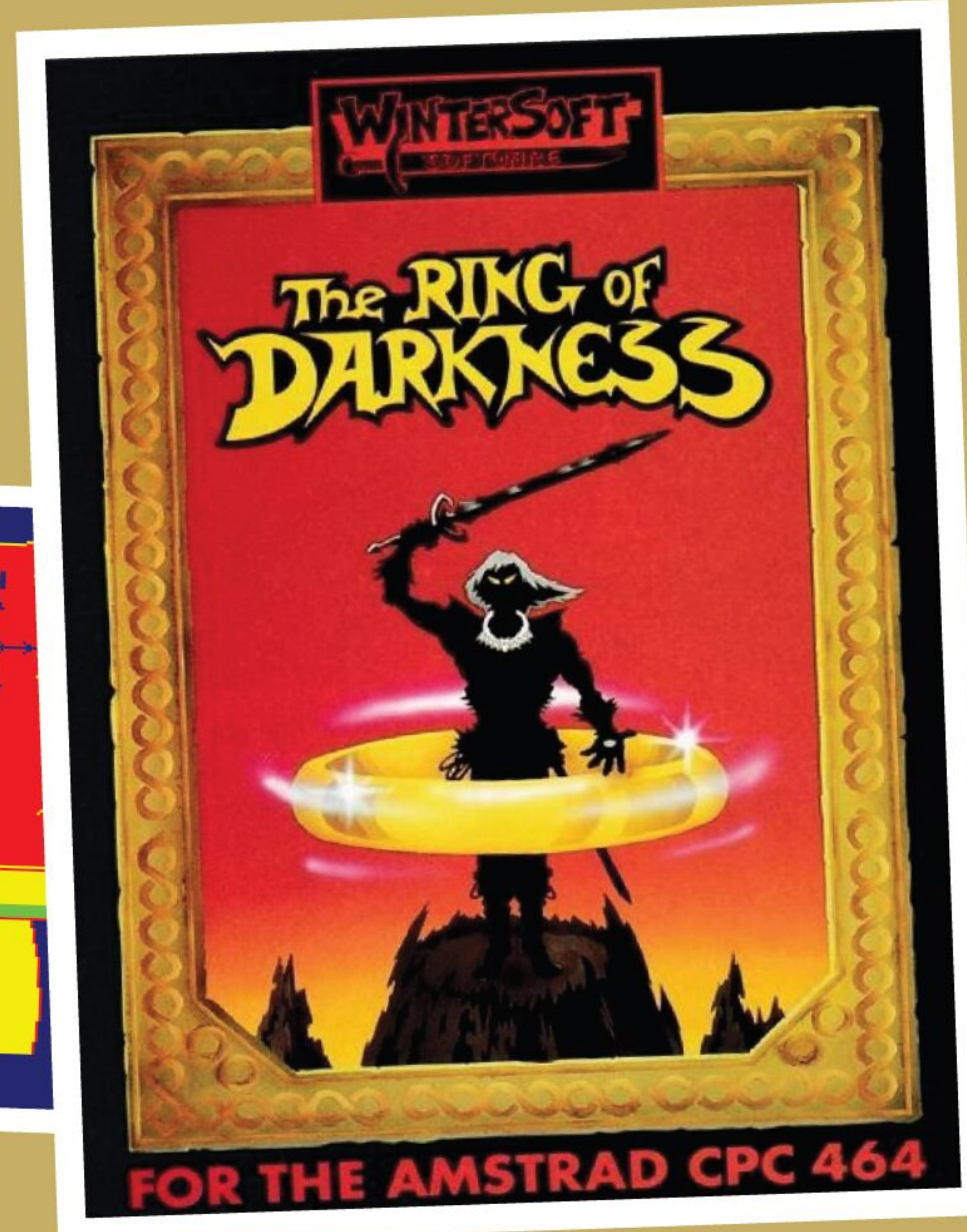
Next, we have Datacom's *Execution* which, despite its striking cover, is actually a tarted-up version of the classic pen-and-paper game, Hangman. While the game's mechanics are essentially the same, in this sci-fi interpretation, instead of being hung, the player is vaporised should they fail to guess enough correct letters. As a game – especially in multiplayer – it works nicely enough, but I can't help but feel a few Amstrad fans would have been taken in by its cover, expecting some sort of first-person shooting game instead. Other than a target reticule in the top right of the image, the only other detail is a muscular figure blasting out of the frame, his cross of fire nicely evoking the crosshair. His bulbous red eyes give him an insectoid look, with his chrome helmet suitably daubed with a skull and crossbones. This figure is undoubtedly the executioner, but what's that cheeky addition the artist has slipped in? A smiley face – maybe Watchmen's Dave Gibbons is the artist?



Game: The Ring of Darkness

Publisher: Wintersoft

This RPG-graphic adventure game was ambitious for 1985, presenting several different viewpoints and a rare level of complexity. The player begins as a lowly traveller, venturing into a land cursed by an Evil Sage. Brigands, bandits, and worse stand in your way as you explore, trade, and work, aiming to acquire the sacred and powerful Ring Of Darkness. The cover of this Wintersoft game is surrounded by an appropriate frame full of interlinked circles, and while it's probably the most



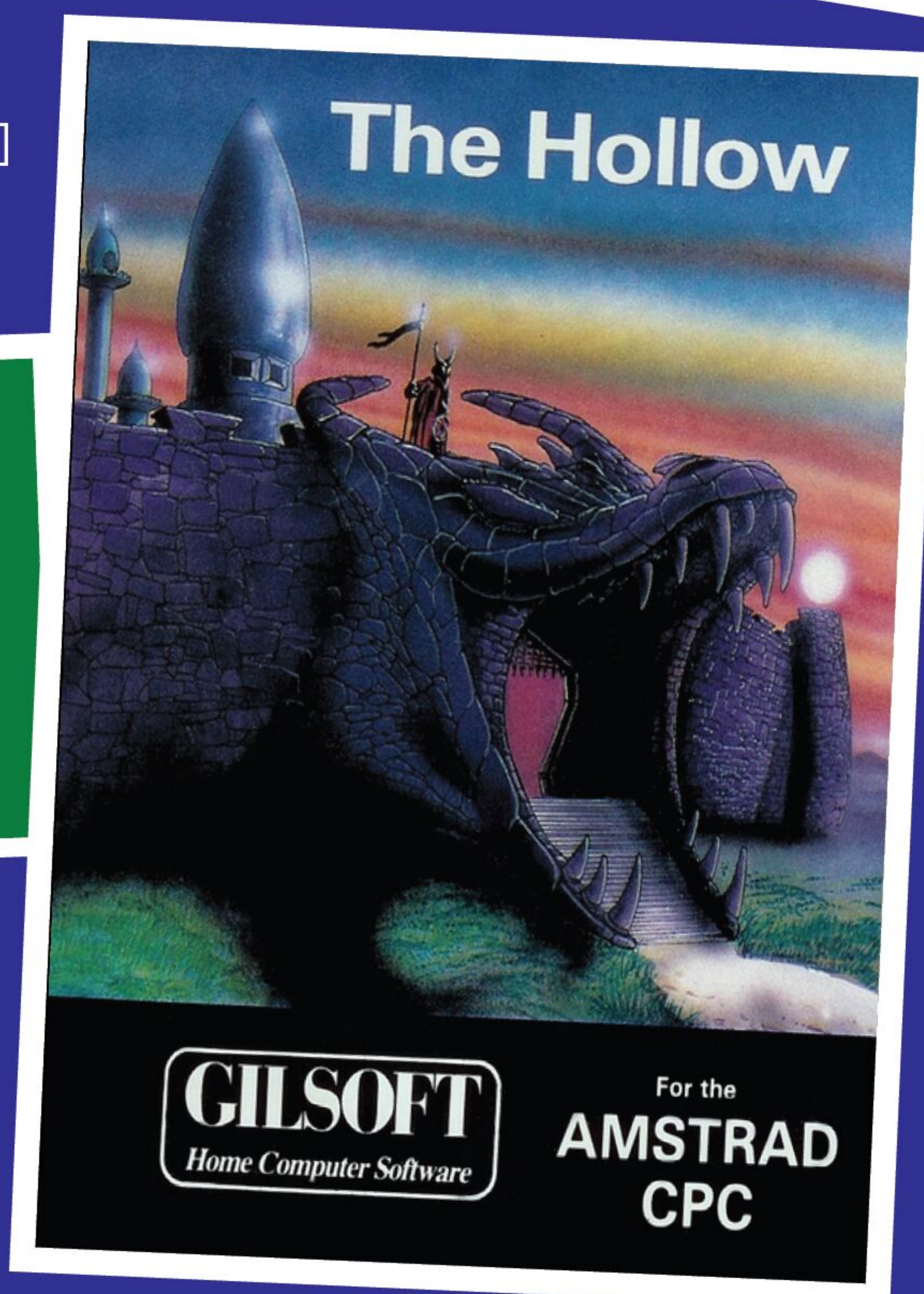
straightforward image of this selection, that's not to demean its power. A dark figure (the player? The Evil Sage? Dave from down the tavern?) stands atop a rocky plateau, a narrow ebony blade above its head. The eponymous ring embraces its waist, giving the picture the air of a high-rise hula hoop competition. I love the crimson sky and elegant lettering of the game's title; both contribute nicely to the dismal atmosphere of this land. But that dark figure, evincing pure evil and power, impresses most.

Game: The Hollow

Publisher: Gilsoft

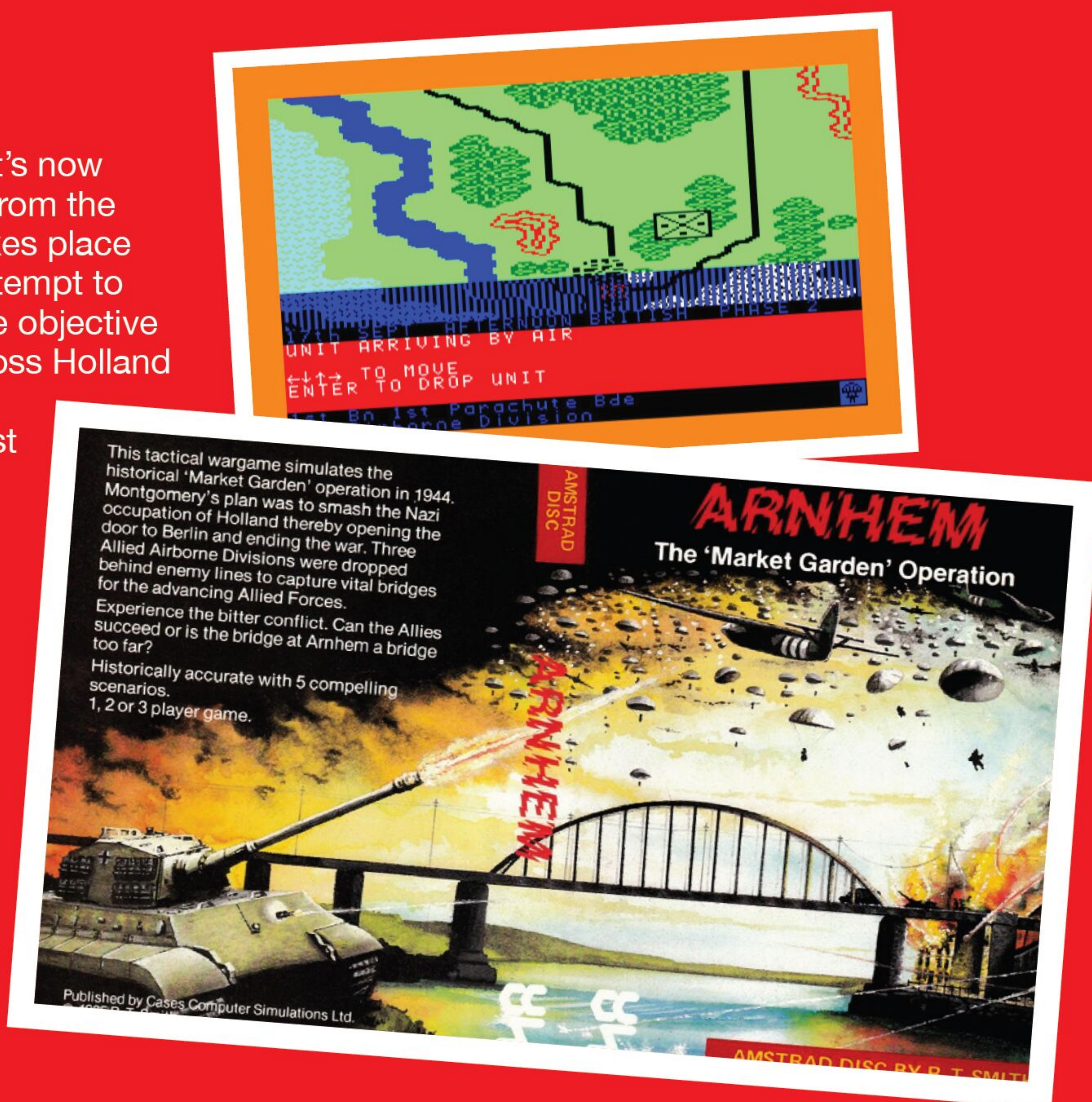
It's adventure time again! Publisher Gilsoft was renowned for its adventure games in the Eighties [it still is today! – Ed] and this Quilled epic has two versions, one text-only and the other with graphics. Interestingly, the game's plot also changes depending on which version you

play, and in either case, the descriptions are as eloquent and evocative as most other Gilsoft games. *The Hollow's* cover is a typical Terry Greer picture: classy, emotive, and menacing. A lone figure stands upon the battlements of a castle, a flag billowing in the wind. Strange, eastern steeples rise behind it as a weak sun lends an eldritch vibe to the picture. However, it's that ridiculously ornate entrance that pleases the most: shaped as a dragon's head, this reptilian doorway could not fail to intimidate any who approach and palpably suggests an evil presence within the castle's walls.



Game: Arnhem
Publisher: CCS

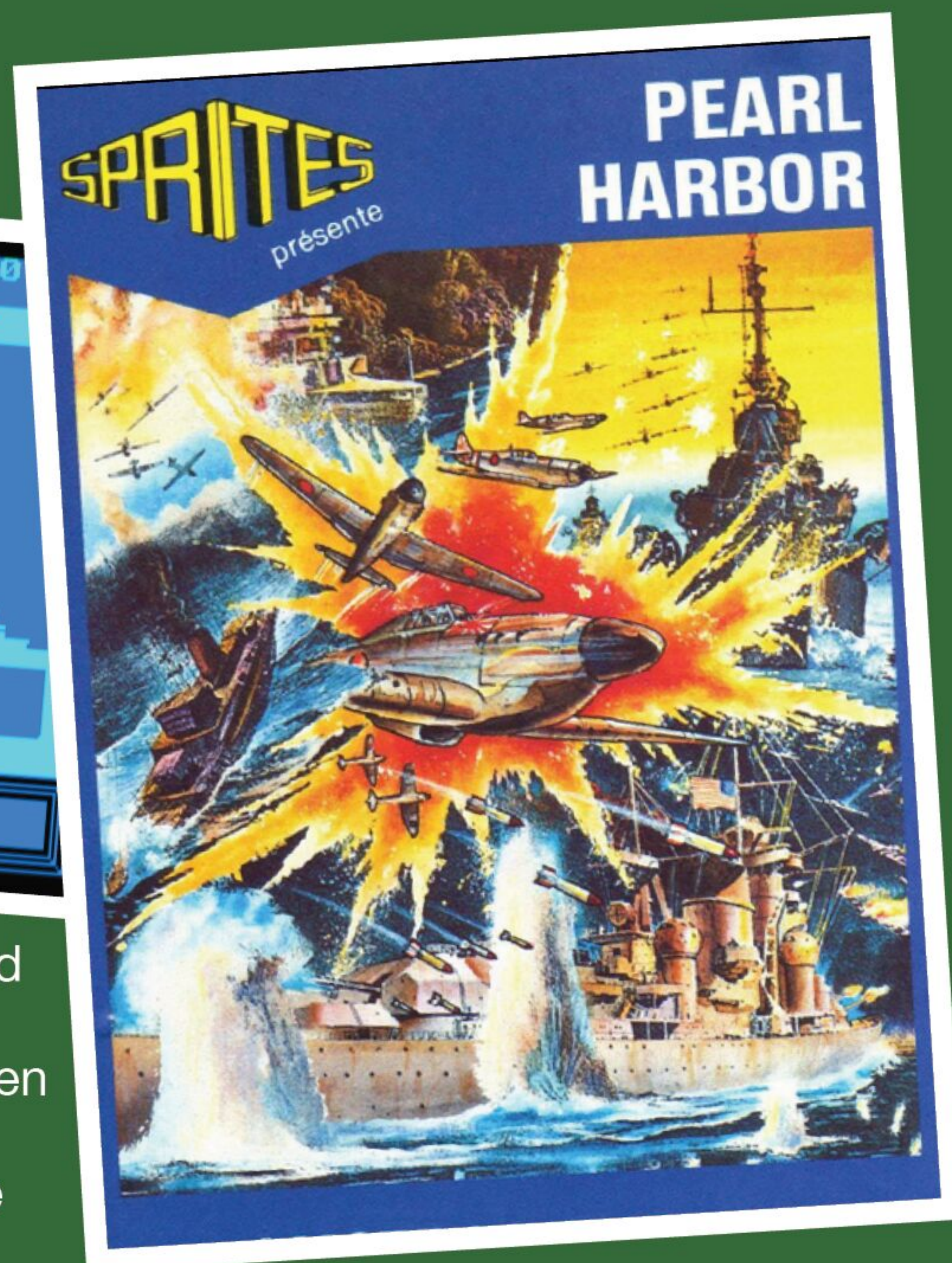
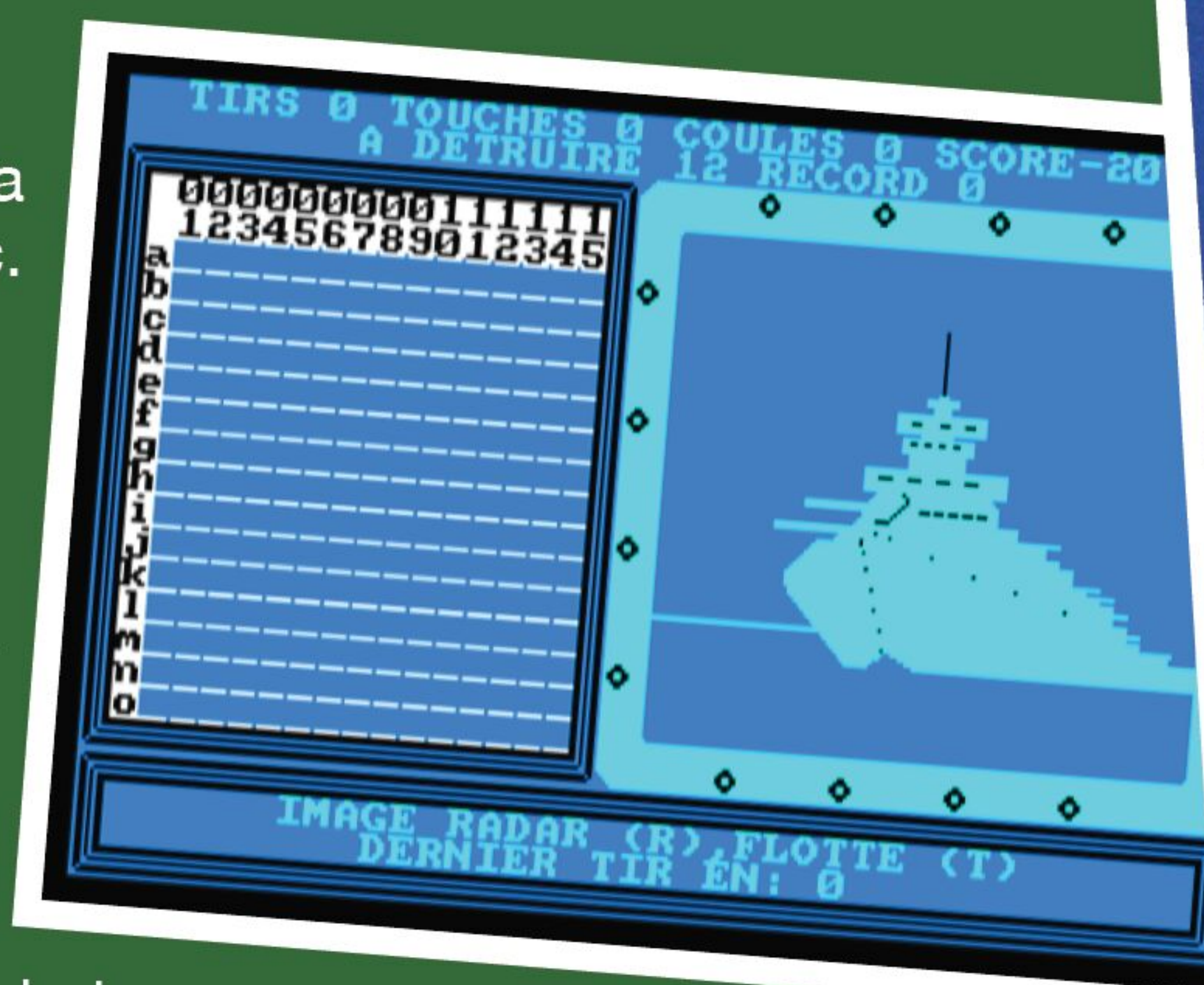
Moving on from adventure games, let's now turn to the topic of war with a title from the masters of the genre, CCS. *Arnhem* takes place in 1944 as The Allies mount a daring attempt to bring World War II to an early close. The objective was to capture several key bridges across Holland and Belgium, and as we know from history, the operation was a failure, most notably at *Arnhem*, scuppering hopes of ending the war by Christmas 1944. CCS specialised in large game cases and wraparound covers such as this. I think it's an original painting – usually, CCS credits the artist – and it's lovely, nonetheless. Allied planes circle below the game's title, disgorging their cargo of paratroopers onto the lowlands below. A dramatic battle is already occurring on the ground as an Allied paratrooper division bravely defends its side of the Arnhem bridge. I love the classic style of this image, which fits the theme perfectly.



Game: Pearl Harbor
Publisher: Sprites

Let's continue the World War II theme but shift to a different theatre: the Pacific. Until the end of 1941, the United States remained ambivalent to events in Europe, choosing to adopt a policy called Isolationism. Then, on December 7th, the Japanese fleet launched a devastating attack on the US base in *Pearl Harbor*, effectively declaring war.

But that's enough of the history lesson – look at this action-packed cover! Various warships float around the periphery of this picture; the top one appears to be mimicking the famous photo of a stricken battleship; tall plumes of water surround the vessel at the bottom of the image, and like *Arnhem*, there's an apt historical style to the artwork. My favourite element is the aircraft in the centre of the cover, bursting spectacularly from a fiery explosion. This admiration is despite the picture's inaccuracy: the planes lack the square cowling of the Mitsubishi Zero and Aichi D3A bombers that Japan used in the attack.



AMSTRAD Art

by
Zoe Kirk Robinson

It must be said that 2023 has been a brilliant year for art on the Amstrad scene. So many pixel pioneers partaking in painstakingly precise practices to produce pictures that pierce the perceived limits of what the CPC can provide. Could a more perfect parade of palettes be presented for

our pleasure, or would saying pretty please just be taking the [Stop that. Stop that right now! - Ed].

1 - The Mona Lisa : Musicman3512 (2023)

If someone told me as a child that I would one day be able to see a borderless picture of the Mona Lisa on my beloved CPC, I would not have believed them. Yet here it is, and it looks absolutely amazing. Musicman3512 has used a large amount of dithering to achieve this fantastic display of Renaissance art on a standard CPC in Mode 0, and the results speak for themselves.

Musicman is no stranger to pushing the CPC to its artistic limits. This is one of sixteen slides in his '16 Tableaux Celebres sur CPC' demo, but their work dates back over a decade. While this demo runs on any CPC, you will need Parados, as it's available only as an extended disc.



2 - Final Strike : Vanity (2023)

From old masters to new, Final Strike is a very striking piece (pun intended) that gracefully disguises the horrors of war in vibrant pop art. The way the bold red of the aircraft (flying upside-down for maximum cool factor) contrasts with the cool blues of the background makes the vehicle burst forward and stick in the viewer's attention. Meanwhile, the warm sands of the ground are dithered, giving them a deep, shadowy look that balances out the frame.

Then, in the centre and wrapped in dark blues and blacks, is a city. A city that's on fire, although you'll be forgiven for not noticing that right away because it's depicted in a manner that makes it almost an afterthought. Did that aircraft just bomb that city? We'll never know for sure.



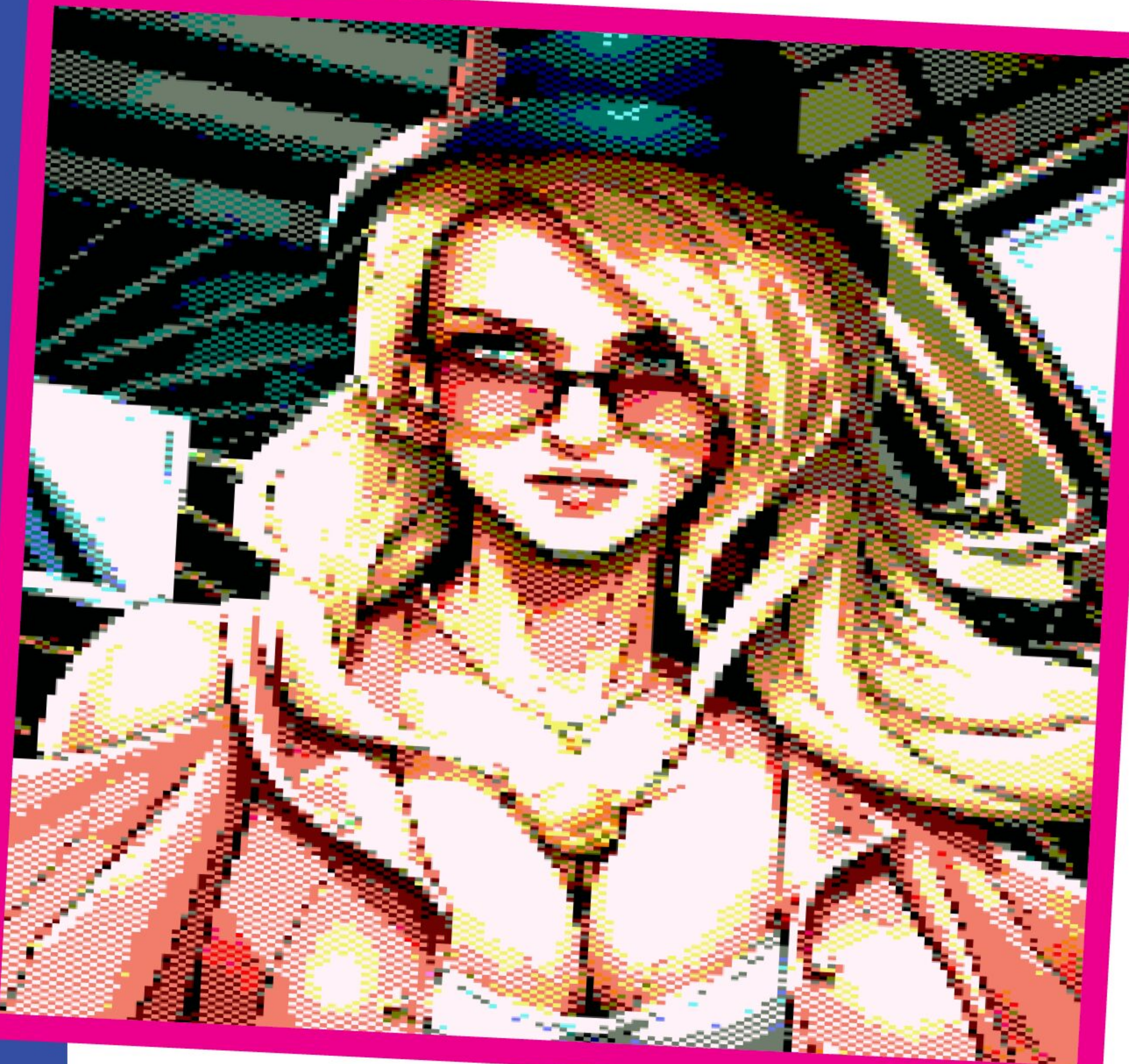
3 - Desire-less : Cyrille Gouret (2023)

Another master of the dither art method, Cyrille Gouret of Amstradiens has produced a wonderful piece of modern art that has more than a little manga influence to it. The symmetry of the woman's face gives the feel of a perfectly balanced image,

but on closer inspection, her hair and the way her jacket billows suggest movement.

Using pastels for the foreground softens what would otherwise be quite a harsh picture, as the dark industrial background, picked out in cold greys and greens, could easily overwhelm things. Nevertheless, this is a bright and eye-catching image that definitely rewards repeat viewing.

The Amstrad is often criticised for having a very bold pop art palette, but images like this show what its colour range is truly capable of.



4 - Slideshow PGR2023 : Cyrille Gouret (2023)

Amstradiens' Cyrille Gouret strikes again, this time with an image that is shockingly not from the Amstrad Plus! Yes, this masterpiece of multicolour is running on a standard CPC 6128. The way all the colours are blended together to produce such a stunning image is frankly shocking, as I wasn't aware the CPC could produce something like this.

The eyes alone are rendered in a way that you can almost feel what the subject is thinking about when this image (which I doubt I'm wrong in thinking is a digitised photograph) was taken, and the use of warm tones throughout blends the lady with the background, but not so much that she becomes indistinguishable from it. This is a bright, welcoming composition that should bring a smile to anyone's face.



COMPILATION CORNER



Welcome to 'Compilation Corner', where we celebrate the fantastic big box compilations of yesteryear. In this issue, Colin Bell takes a look at Domark's *Wheels of Fire*, a compilation featuring some of the finest and not-so-finest arcade racing ports for the Amstrad CPC.

WHEELS OF FIRE

Billed as the 'Ultimate Driving Compilation', *Wheels of Fire* gave us a box set comprising some of the greatest arcade driving ports ever to grace CPC and, indeed, the 8-bit era. Although published by software house Domark, the pack also featured games from renowned software houses U.S.Gold, Ocean, and Activision.

As with all the compilation packs we cover here, *Wheels of Fire* came in a nice large

cardboard box and featured some rather stunning box art that showcases all four main vehicles from each of the games included. As a rather nice added touch, each of the number plates displays the associated software house's logo, and there's even a glimpse of some of the level artwork surrounding each of the cars. With its glossy and shiny red backdrop and vibrant yellow text, this is one compilation set that makes you want to pick it up and drool over it. In addition to a nicely produced and well-presented booklet-type

manual, you were also treated to an A1-size poster of the box artwork to stick up in your bedroom.

The back of the box features four columns, each showcasing the cover art of each game, and in true



Above: The awesome A1 poster, that I still have to this day hanging in my retro-cave.





Above: The iconic *Wheels of Fire* box art featuring each of the game's cars and custom number plates.



early video game advertising style, the screenshots are all from the 16-bit Amiga & Atari ST versions. But CPC owners need not fear, for the graphics on at least three of our titles were actually rather good.

Game-wise, the star of the show, for me at least,

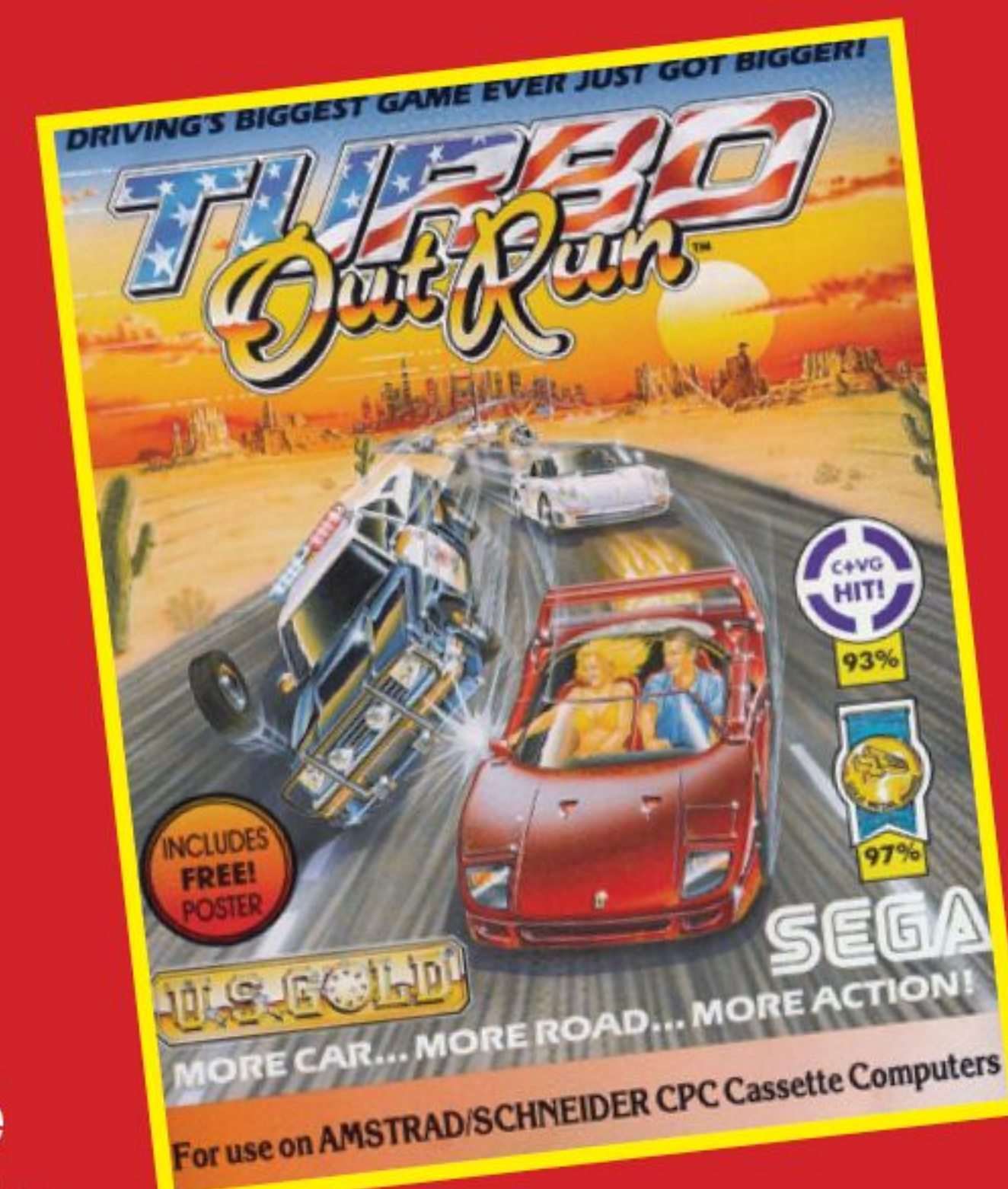


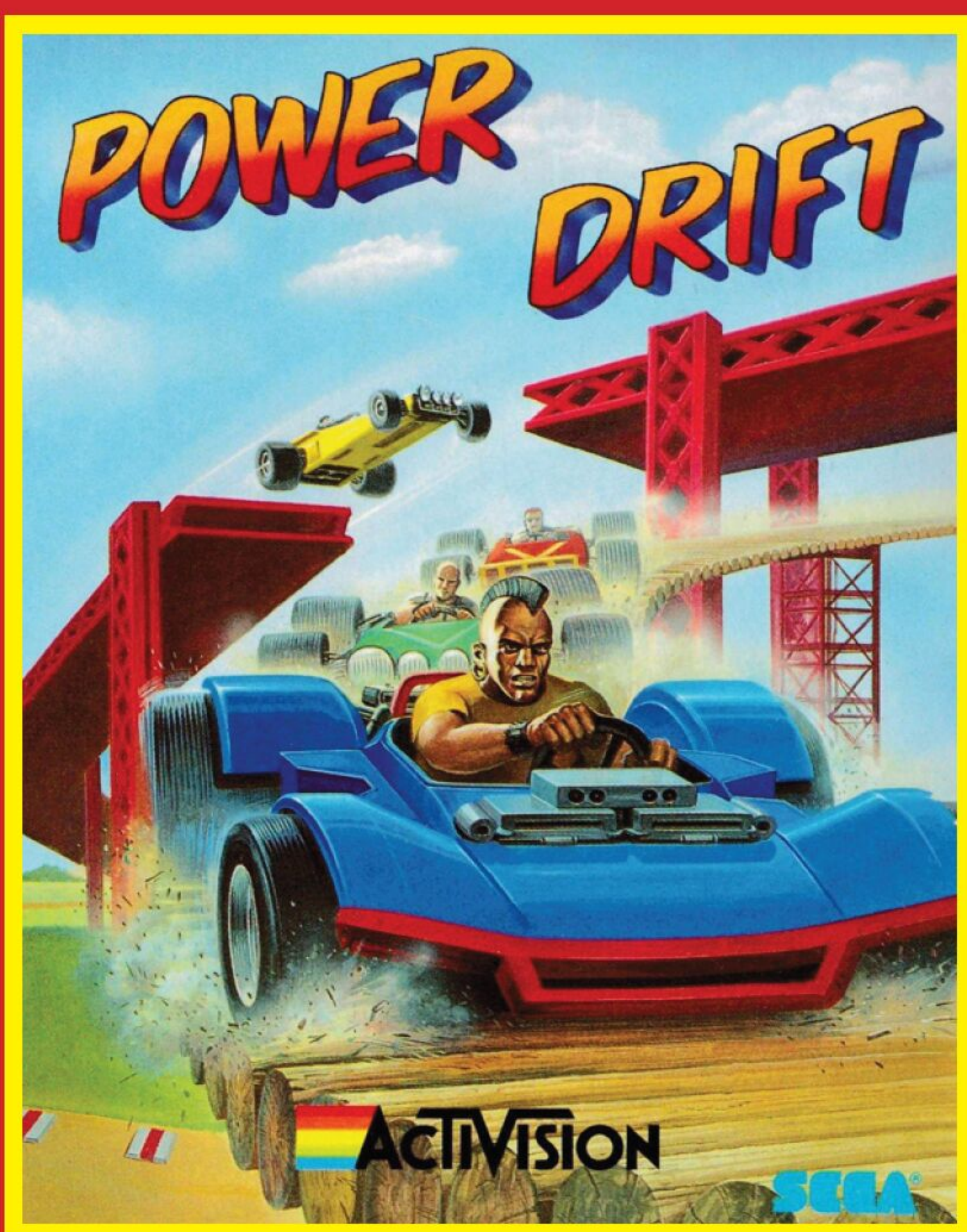
has to be *Chase HQ* from Ocean Software. It's an action-packed police racing game that seats you behind the wheel of a Porsche 928 and sees you racing through various landscapes as you attempt to bring fleeing criminals to justice by ramming and wrecking their getaway vehicles. The game looks great, and, for the CPC, the smooth scrolling is utterly sublime. Have 128K? If the answer is yes then you're



in for an extra treat, with some sampled speech and no need to load levels as the game automatically loads them into the extra 64K!

Next in the compilation pack and following closely behind is the follow-up to the 1986 arcade classic, *Out Run*. Yes, it's the imaginatively titled *Turbo Out Run* from U.S. Gold. This time, you're in the driving seat of a Ferrari F40, and as with the first game, you must compete against the clock as you race across the United States. As the title suggests, you also have a new 'Turbo' option at your disposal which, when pressing the desired button, offers up a rather fast but somewhat brief speed boost. Graphically it's not bad, and the scrolling rate has been vastly improved over that of the first game, which moved along at a snail's pace. The only issue is that the cars, especially the F40, haven't been drawn to the correct scale and don't look right on screen. As you can see from the screenshot below, your car is massive and virtually takes over the whole of the road. Still, at the least the car somersaults and spins now when you crash or skid off





Above: *Power Drift*, one of the best CPC arcade racing game ports ever created.

the main road, something that was missing from the first game.

Bringing up the rear but not lagging behind in last place is our third offering, *Power Drift* from Activision, a fast and furious kart racing



game featuring twelve very interesting and unusual drivers along with five different scenarios. Unlike most typical racers with standard flat roads, *Power Drift*



sees you bob up and down the track as you shoot up over ramps and bridges of varying heights in a bid to advance to the next stage. The CPC version makes full use of the system's graphic capabilities with vibrant colours, detailed animations, and smooth scrolling.

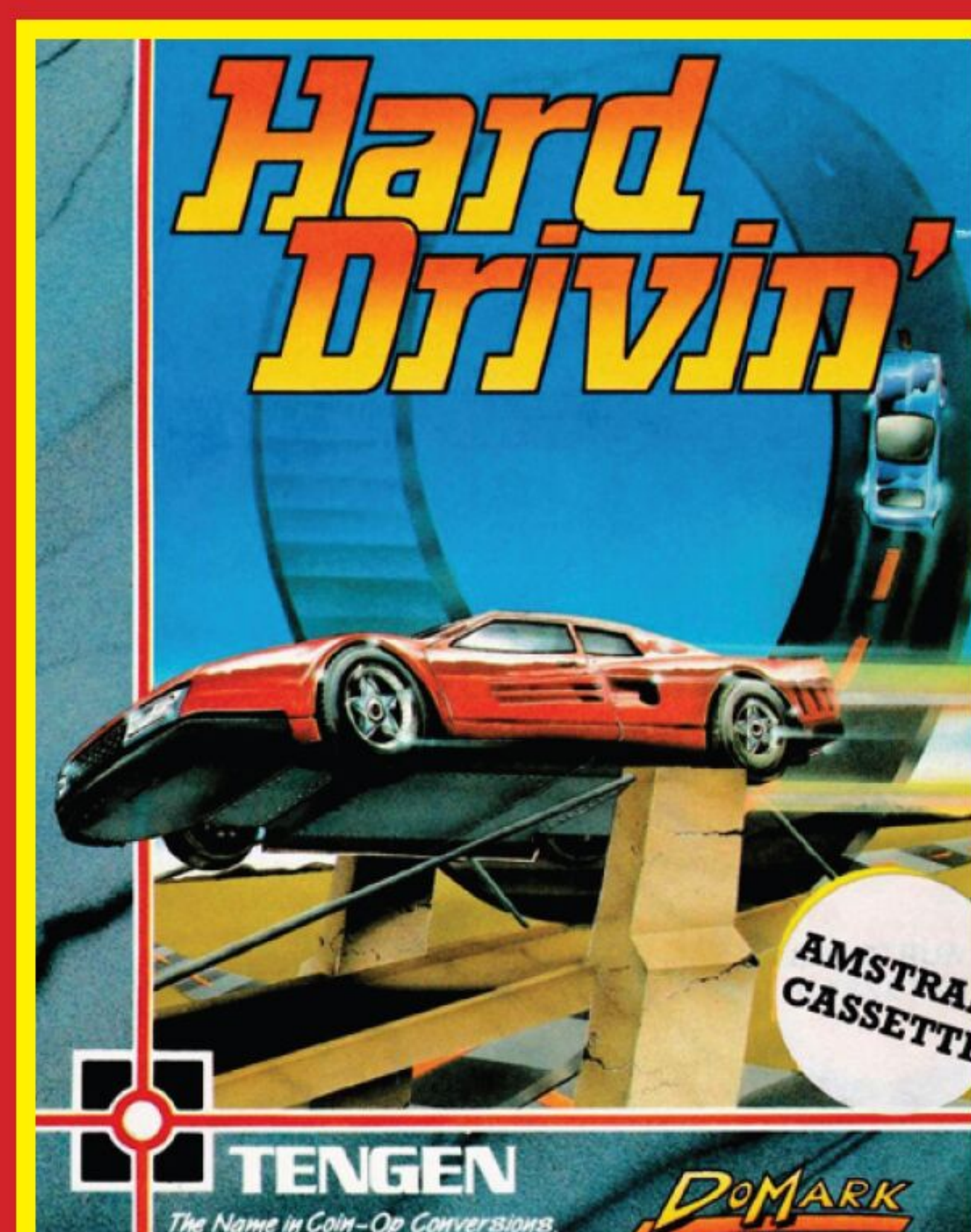
Power Drift is a fine port of an arcade classic that has transferred across well. I'd go so far as to say it's one of the best racers you'll play on the CPC.

In last place, and for good reason, is Domark's only addition to the compilation set, *Hard Drivin'*, a solid 3D vector graphic driving simulator that features other vehicles, a speed and stunt track, and even instant replays of your crashes. At first you'll be in awe of the



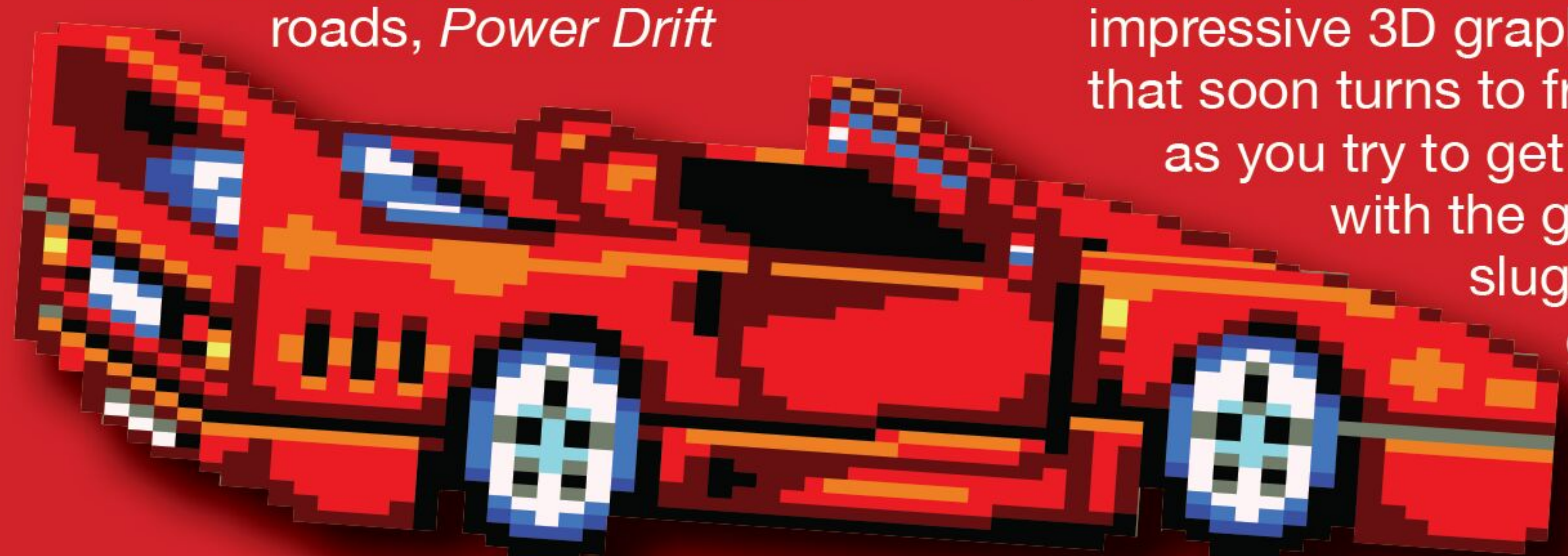
impressive 3D graphics, but that soon turns to frustration as you try to get to grip with the game's sluggish gameplay and

terrible steering system which makes it near-impossible to stay straight on the road. And then there's the other road vehicles which appear out of nowhere and collide with your car. There's not much in the way of sound either, except for a terrible whining engine noise, and graphically, it looks like



a lazy ZX Spectrum port. Unlike *Power Drift* and *Chase HQ*, this is how not to do a port of an arcade classic.

Overall, *Wheels of Fire* is a 'WHEELY' good compilation box set that even to this day is sure to 'DRIVE' you all crazy!





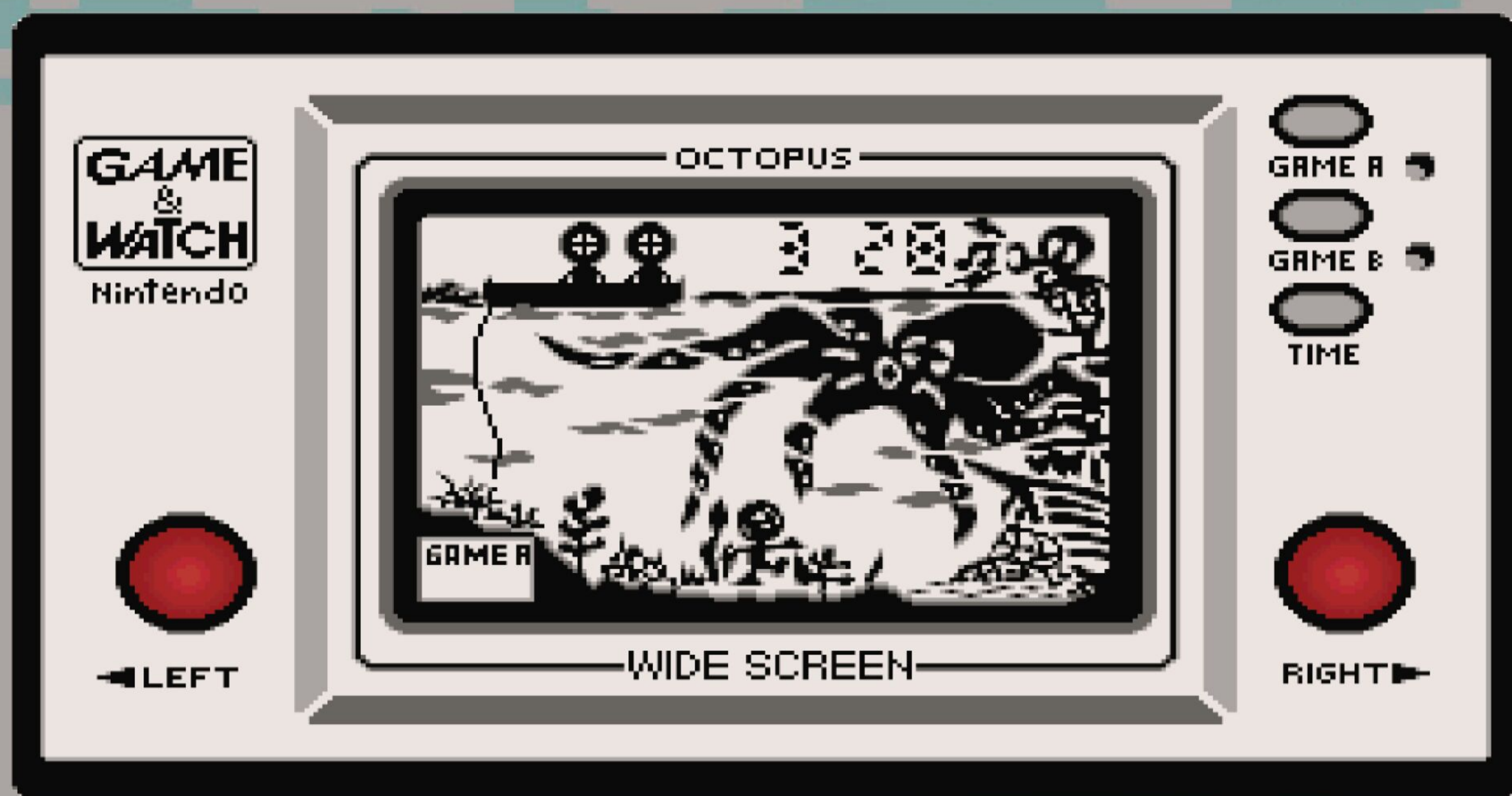
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OCTOPUS



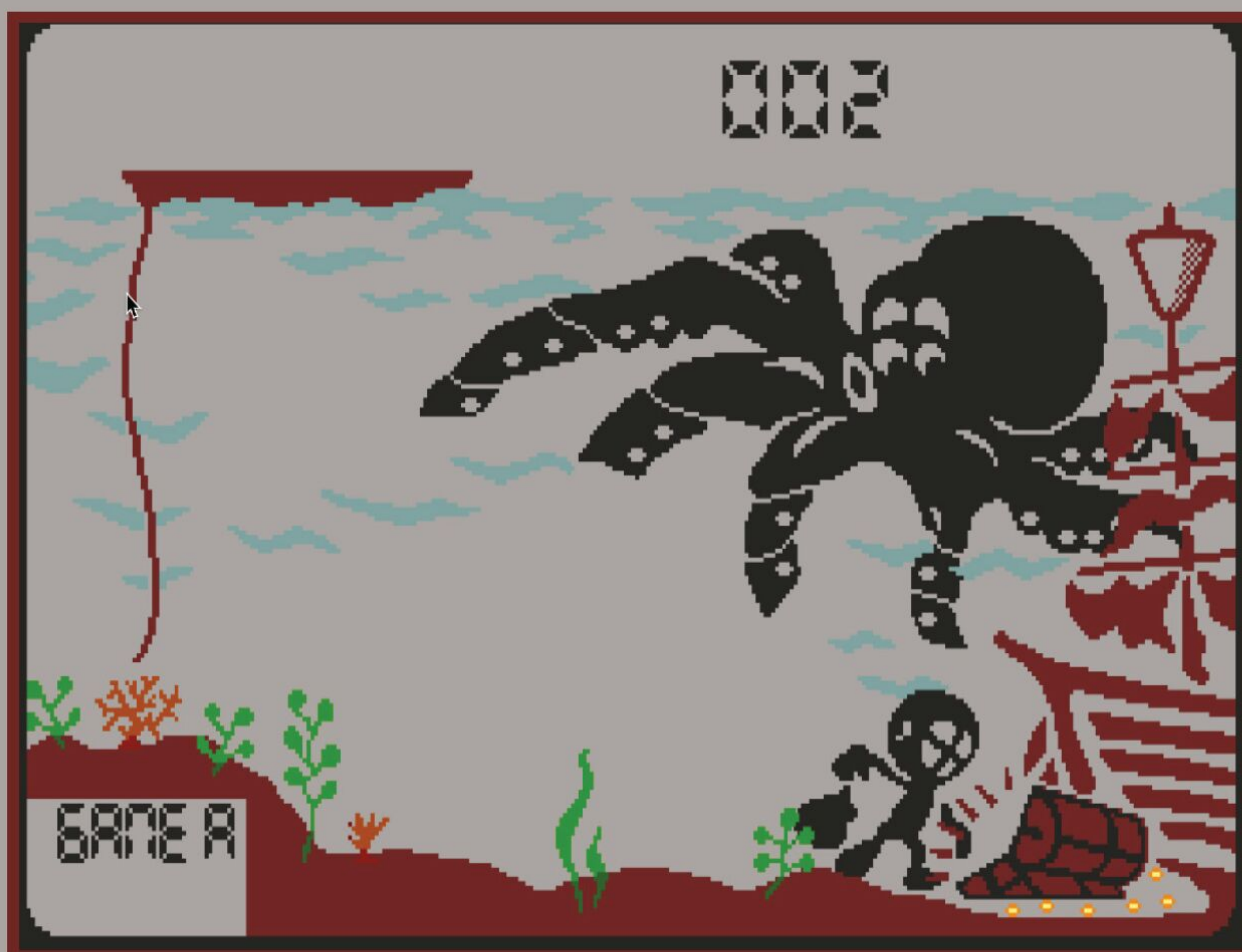
Author: **Team Galaxy**
Released: **2023**

I'm not usually a man short of words, but I feel unsure of how to approach *Octopus* on the GX4000/Plus. Much like the treasure-hunting deep-sea divers that you control to reach the riches beyond the giant sea monster's limbs, in fact. Released in 1981, this game was one of the Game & Watch series of handhelds produced by Nintendo. The Game & Watch would eventually evolve into the Game Boy, of course, but before this, the games were singular

and basic. Those of us at a certain age always loved the old LCD units, of course, and *Octopus* is an enjoyable

little game for what it is. But does it really merit a conversion to the Plus platform? I'm not sure,

Below: Grab the sunken treasure as quickly as possible! Watch out for those deadly tentacles!



Chris



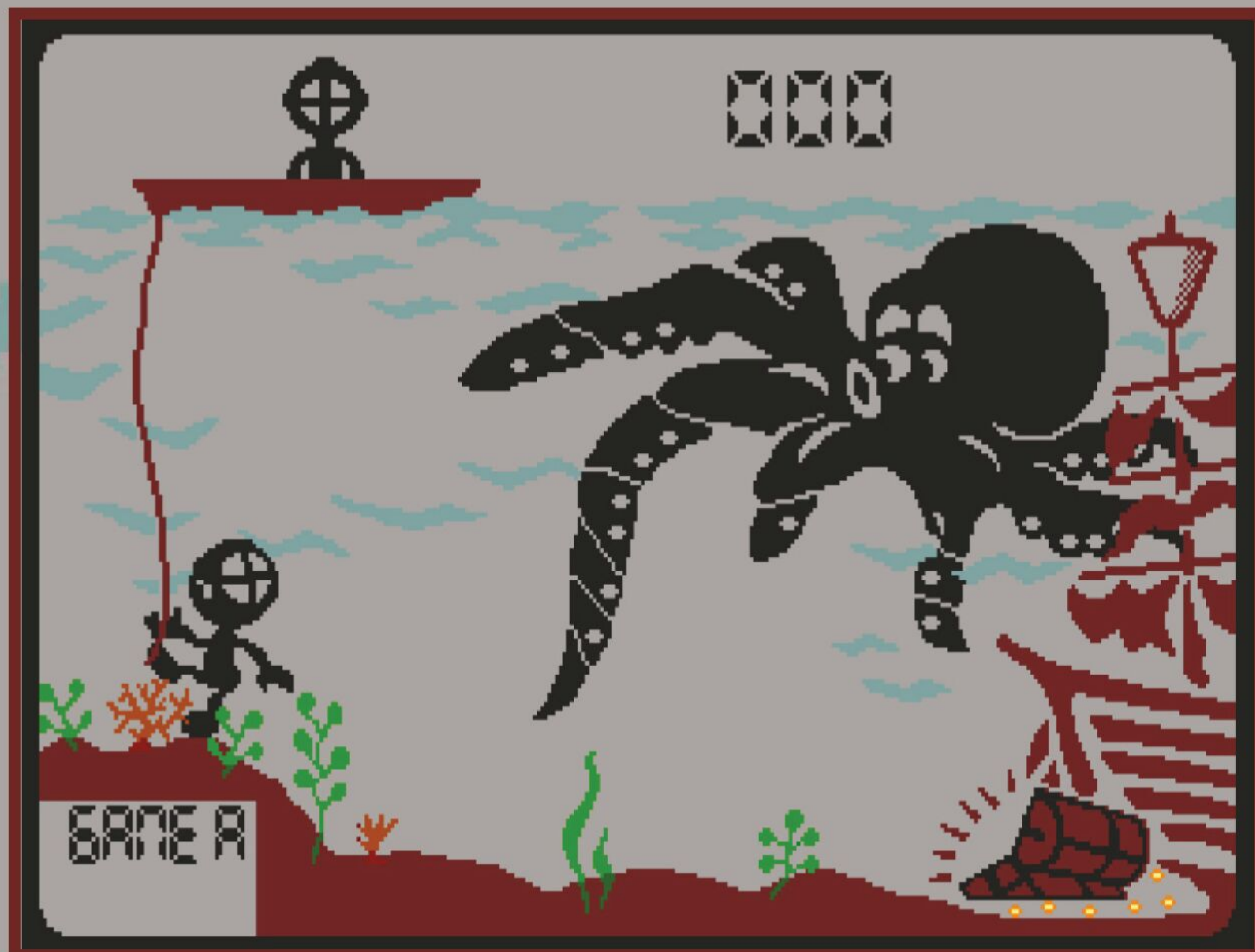
CRITICISM

While this is a wonderful homage to the original game, with some lovely presentation aspects and SFX, it's as simple as a video game could be, just like many of the old LCD handhelds back in the day. You can pick the tentacle moves quickly, and therefore, it's not much of a challenge. It looks lovely, very nostalgic, and faithful, and the added graphic cut-scenes and images are welcome. One of them is quite horrific. A celebration of the Game & Watch brought to the GX4000 is a unique thing for sure, and nice in its own small way.

but a few top names in the Amstrad community are, as they developed it. So, I yield to their judgement, I guess.



With basic forward and back movements, the object is to reach 999 points to win the game. You do this by collecting treasure protected by the titular octopus, avoiding its various tentacles from grabbing you. Bonus points can be awarded



Zoë



CRITICISM

This may well be the most interesting Game & Watch conversion yet. It's not a straight port, although it does play like one when you get into it. The enhancements are very interesting - a fun, high-contrast colour set of images slide onto the screen when you get a game over. The full 3D render of the octopus is very cool, too. It's all fantastic presentation. The game is very simple to play but a lot of fun. It looks incredible, too - a near-perfect replica of what a Game & Watch system looks like when you're playing. The octopus and the divers both look fantastic, and the animations (or what you can pass as animation in an LCD game) are very well rendered. Definitely one worth playing.

for returning to your boat, and the speed of the tentacles increases and decreases with the points tally. Simple, basic as you like, and a pixel-perfect recreation of the classic LCD original.

PRESENTATION 70%

Lovely screens and full screen game using the Plus palette.

GRAPHICS 50%

Identical/improved graphics of the original. Simple, single screen.

SOUND 50%

SFX replicated from the source material well.

ADDICTIVENESS 70%

Like many of these types of old-style games, there is an addictive and easy to play quality to this.

LASTABILITY 15%

One task which is easy to finish. Not much else.

**OVERALL
51%**

THE CPC PLUS

ARNOLDS FINAL FORM



Towards the end of the 1980s, rumours were rife that Alan Sugar and his company Amstrad were about to release a series of new revamped CPC computers. Was Amstrad about to enter the 16-bit era? Zoë Kirk-Robinson tells us the story of the rise and fall of the CPC+ range.

Exciting Times!

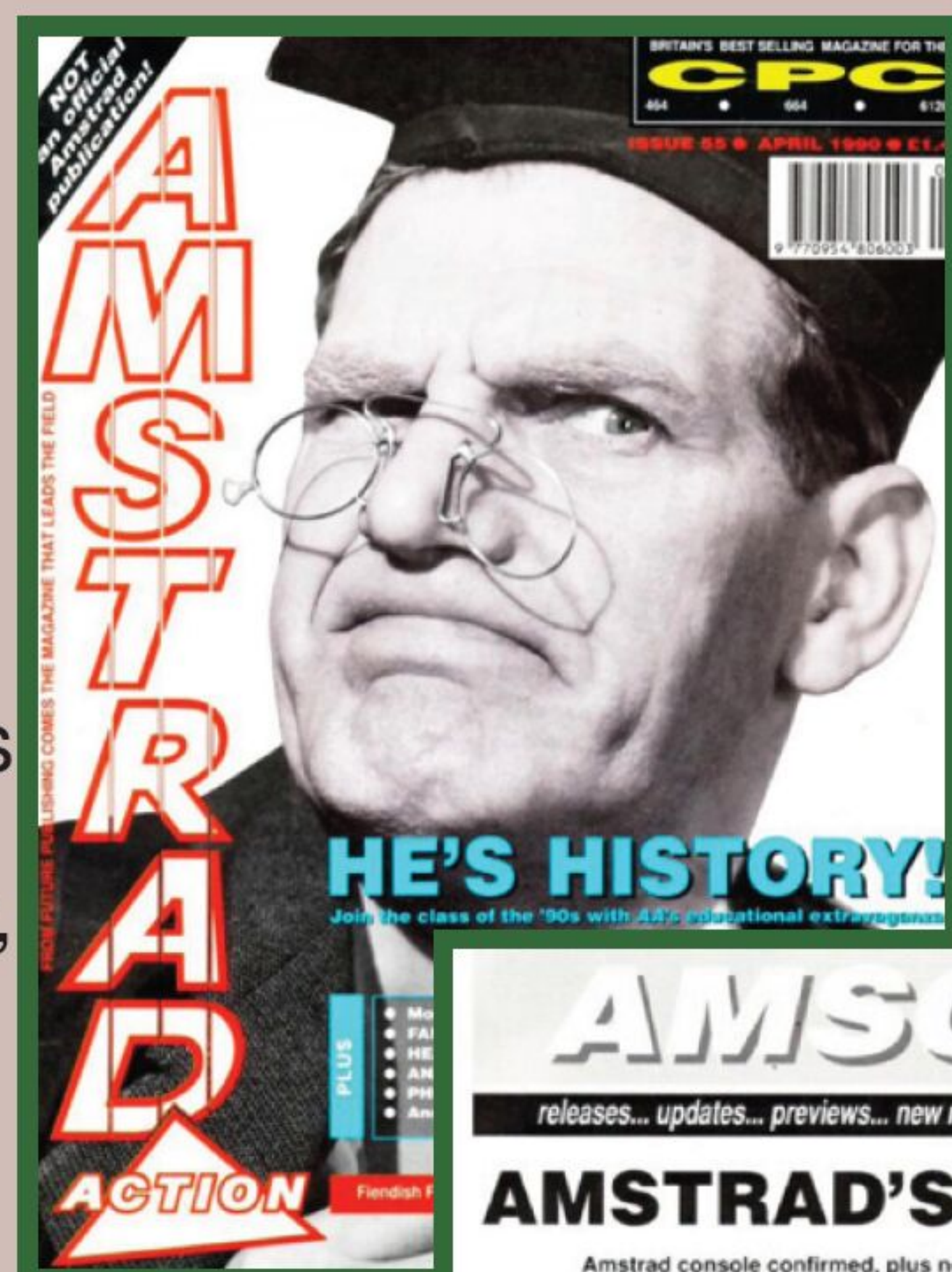
In the late 1980s, many people had a computer at home, but for many, it was looking old and outdated. The 16-bits were on the rise, and Amstrad had a problem. Its CPC range had done well, but it couldn't compete any more.

"We wanted to relaunch the old machine with better facilities..." Roland Perry, designer of the CPC and the

Plus, told Amstrad Computer User. Rumours of a new Amstrad computer emerged in late summer 1989, with New Computer Express reporting: "the machine ... has already suffered delays". Apparently, it was originally scheduled for launch in time for Christmas 1989, but "problems with other computers" slowed development. Those computers? The Amstrad Plus, a revamped CPC with a cartridge port to play console games.

Ominously, NCE claimed "Amstrad's pragmatic approach means that it will not be overly concerned with the technical specification ... the console will be pitched as ... more of a toy...". Roland Perry confirmed this approach, telling ACU Amstrad wanted "...to produce

an 8-bit machine with as much as possible of the functionality of a 16-bit ... but based on existing



developers almost certainly have prototypes right now ... a number of major software houses have already been approached by Amstrad...". Bestselling publisher CodeMasters was not amongst them; Amstrad was only courting the "full price" developers.

In July, Amstrad

Specification

Action revealed leaked "Plus" specifications: 64 hardware sprites

(this wasn't true but there was direct memory access to stop it burdening the CPU); hardware-level scan-line interrupts; and a new custom chip to handle it all.

The game cartridges had 128k capacity, half the rumoured size.

Meanwhile, the Master System (the GX4000's direct rival) could handle 512k.

AA also claimed the Plus range was fully backward compatible with CPC software (which has never actually been true with any of the range) and that putting a cartridge into the computer would "execute a special control sequence

which switches in the new hardware, effectively flipping from computer to console mode". This claim stuck around for a long time, until demo coders showed Plus features could be accessed at any time.

In this same issue, AA confirmed that "the 6128 ROM is no longer



available", and rumours circulated that the 464 and 6128 were no longer in production. New Computer Express later reported that Amstrad had ceased production of the Spectrum +3, citing competing market share with the Plus range. Amstrad were going all-in!

In June, journalists huddled into a room in Paris to hear all the details about the new computers. The Plus name was confirmed, as was the GX4000 console. Prices were varied, with the GX4000 launching at £99 while the 464 Plus carried a £230/£330 tag (for mono or colour monitor, respectively), and the 6128 Plus was a beefy £330/£430.

By comparison, the Amiga 500 was £400.

The new range would launch in September, the target month if you want your computer in kids' hands for Christmas. It would be accompanied by a marketing blitz, to get

Amscene
releases... updates... previews... new releases... updates... previews...

CPC 'PLUS' SPEC REVEALED

Technical details of CPC 'Plus' and CPC Console leaked months before official launch

ore news has broken concerning the specification of Amstrad's top-secret CPC 'plus' and console, two months before the official launch this Autumn.

We first reported on the new machines back in AA55. It had been known for months that Amstrad was planning a console addition to the CPC range, but until then the Brentwood company had managed to keep all other details hush-hush. However, Amstrad Action learned in March that not only was the console to get upgraded sound and graphics hardware and a cartridge port, the existing machines would get the same enhancements too and be relaunched, possibly as the CPC 'Plus' range.

Latest developments

AA has uncovered some of the secret technical specifications of the new computers and console, a series of enhancements that look set to turbo-charge the CPC. They include:

- 64 hardware sprites, each with 32 colours
- Built-in hardware scrolling
- An increased colour palette and 32 on-screen background colours
- An improved sound chip
- A powerful custom chip to handle all the new features

Current CPC owners have nothing to fear from the hardware enhancements of the new machines. The CPC Plus models will run all existing CPC software, and retain the standard CPC 3-inch disk format. This quashes rumours that the company was to abandon this size in favour of the more popular 3.5-inch format.

It seems that under normal operation the new CPC computers (as opposed to the console) will behave exactly like the standard machine. Inserting a cartridge, however, will execute a special control sequence which switches in the new hardware, effectively flipping from computer to console mode.

It is unlikely that the cartridge-only console will be able to run any existing CPC specific software, though. Apart from the cartridge slot and joystick ports, the only other external feature to be seen is a Pause button. There is thought to be no provision to add a disk drive or tape interface.

A hard line on software?

Reports suggest that the Amstrad intends to keep tight control over the production of cartridges designed for the console. The company is to introduce strict Nintendo-style licensing agreements whereby third-party producers would have to be appointed as official developers before they could write software. So, any cartridge games written for the new machines could be produced only with Amstrad's say so. Presumably, with the company would then benefit from a share of the profits from any software marketed.

As usual, Amstrad declined to comment on any of these reports. Even the launch itself in the Autumn has been neither confirmed nor denied. In the end, it will still be a couple of months before the general public – even the press – will know the facts for sure.

The last 6128 ROMs?

Even though Amstrad CPC 6128 ROMs are technically no longer available (see AA54, mail order company WARE has managed to secure another 100 of the time machines, its last batch of 1,000 (see AA55) sold out in weeks, so any eager purchasers should phone now for a price – if there are any left. The number is 0229 870000.

Above: Amstrad Action reveal the specifications of the new CPC plus range.

(actually there were only 16), each with 32 colours (again, it turned out there were only 16); pixel-perfect hardware scrolling (horizontal and vertical); increased colour palette (4096 colours, the same as the Amiga) with 32 on-screen at any time; an improved sound chip

the word out.

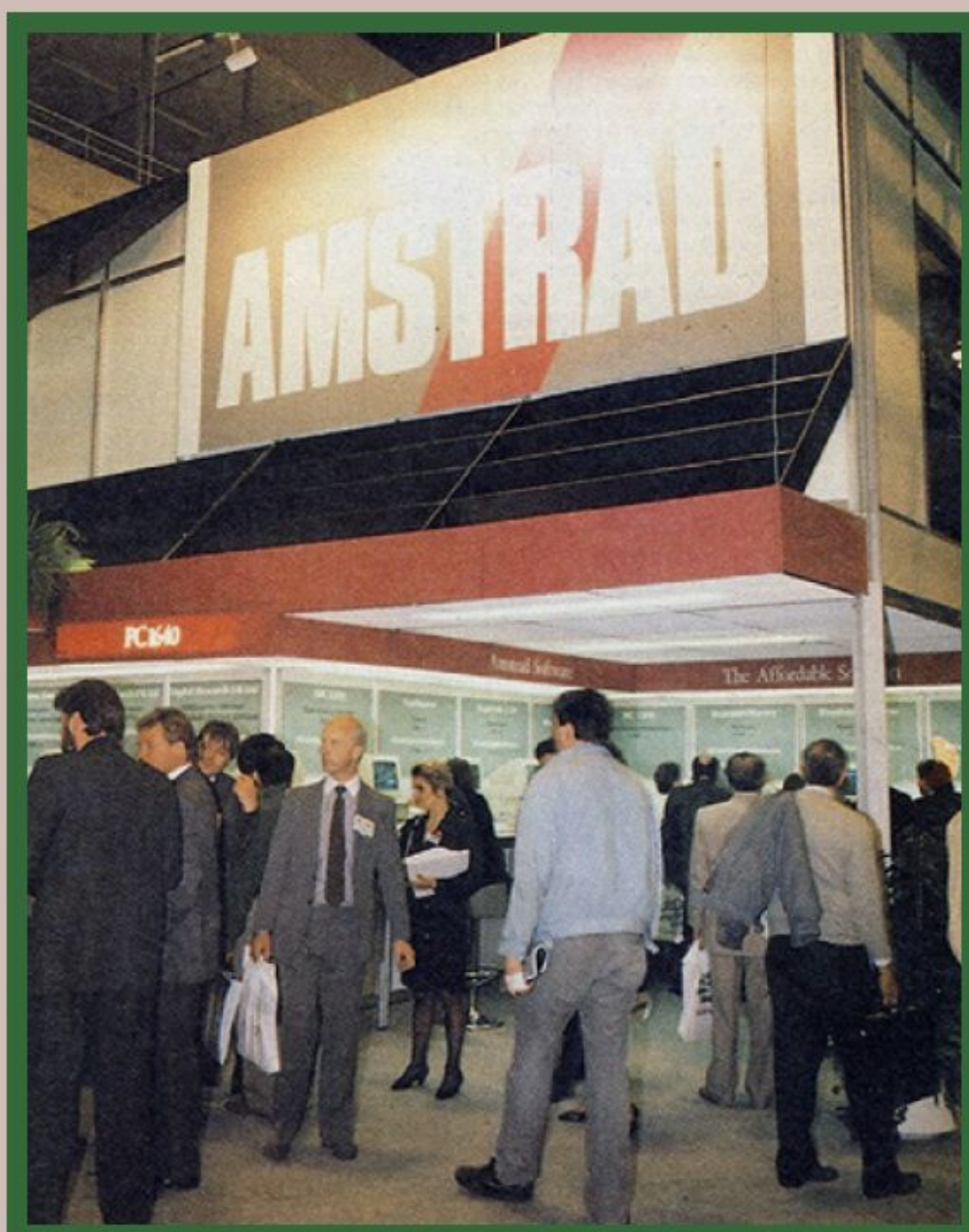
This was a risky move. Amstrad's profits more than halved in the 1989-90 financial year, and by April, the official Amstrad Computer User magazine was teetering on failure, forcing a move to a new publisher. Holding out until the end of the year would let Amstrad's 16-bit competitors bed in even further. If the computers failed to sell, Amstrad would be in trouble.

Nevertheless, users were excited, and some were hopeful Amstrad would make an "expansion pack" available to give CPCs the new Plus features. Sadly, that would never

There may be Trouble ahead

happen.

Meanwhile, Amstrad showed up to the 1990 PC show with



a small display that bundled the CPC into a

PLUS POWER

The new CPC range is here at last. Hold onto your hats as the ACU team takes the lids off of the 464 Plus, the 6128 Plus and the superb GX4000 games console in our no-holds-barred look at these new additions to the Amstrad fold.

CONSOLE CRAZY

Anyone who fancies themselves as a hot gamer should not be without the fantastic GX4000 console. Now, courtesy of those awfully generous people at Amstrad, you don't need to be. Just answer the incredibly simple question below and you could be the lucky winner of the console and a burnin' Rubber cartridge. In what year did the original CPC machines first hit the streets?

Send your answers to:
Console Crazy, ACU, MSM Ltd.,
116-120 Goswell Road,
London EC1V 7QD.

Now read on and find out all the low-down on the best new machines on the market.

Above: The new CPC+ Range in all its boxed glory.

corner alongside the ZX Spectrum and didn't even mention the upcoming Plus computers. The promised advertising campaign seemed strangely absent.

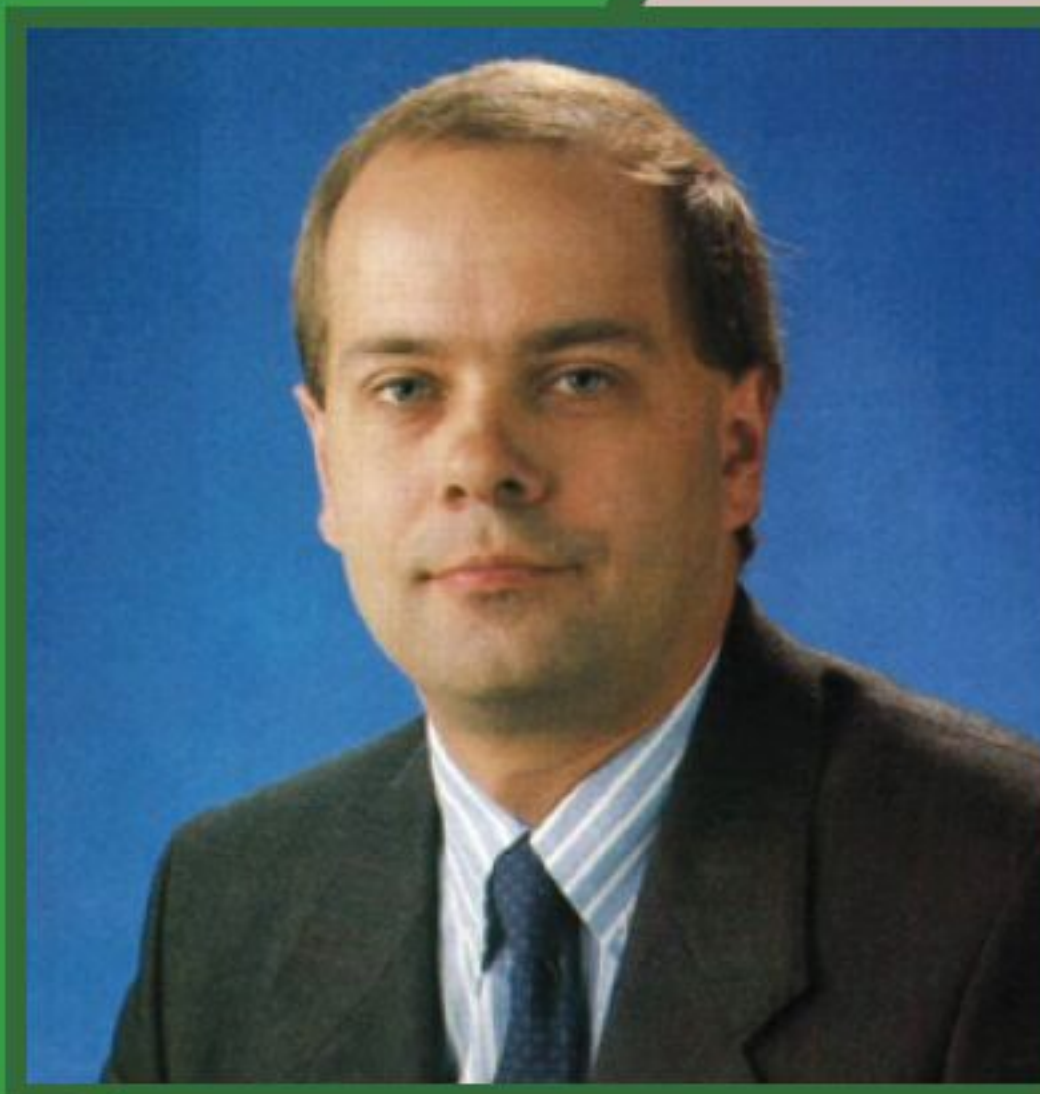
September arrived, and the official Amstrad magazine did not carry the GX4000 or Plus range on its cover - they barely even mentioned the new Plus computers in their news pages.

The month after

launch, Amstrad Action reported that Plus machines were incompatible with almost every CPC peripheral (including the TV modulator) due to its different connectors and expansion ports. The Multiface relaunched with a Plus-compatible connector, but it was then swiftly recalled because it crashed computers when attempting to save. Amstrad reportedly tested

"I see no reason why there should not be a CPC around in ten years time," said Perry. "[Unless] products like the Amiga become more user friendly and cheaper."

- Roland Perry



Above: Perhaps a little bit of wishful thinking there Roland...

the Multiface on the Plus, yet somehow didn't spot this problem.

The 6128 Plus had no DIN socket, so attaching a cassette deck required modding the brand-new computer, invalidating the warranty. Multiple CPC games and utilities were incompatible with the Plus. Serious CPC users and anyone looking to buy budget games on cassette steered clear of the new machines.

Not a great start to a new era.

Christmas came and went, with only one thing being talked about: the Amiga. Roland Perry notoriously told journalists, "We have not improved the basic architecture of the CPC because there is no reason to" when the Plus range launched. Amstrad was pushing an 8-bit computer in a 16-bit world. Sales were reasonable in France (Amstrad Action reported expectations of 20,000 sales per cartridge), but in the UK, the range failed to find an audience.

"I see no reason why there should not be a CPC around in ten years'

time", said Perry. "[Unless] products like the Amiga become more user friendly and cheaper.". At the time, this felt like a very out-of-touch comment, but with hindsight, it was absolutely shocking. A few months later, Mr. Perry left Amstrad. By the

The End of an Era...

summer, Amstrad was laying off staff.

By March '91, RRP's were slashed, and retailers were discounting the machines even more, yet people still weren't buying them. Cartridge games were hard to find, and

Amstrad magazines were carrying complaints from users that only six titles were readily available, even where GX4000 demonstration units let you try out twelve. Cartridge production was handled solely by Amstrad, who were simply not making enough of them. Amstrad Action summed the situation up in May 1992: "the cartridge format is dead as a dodo". Soon, the computers themselves followed suit.

It's not possible to find an official end date for production of the Plus or GX4000. It was discontinued by the middle of 1992, but that's all we can say for sure.

Unfortunately, in the end it was a slow, sad demise for this promising revamp of one of the greatest 8-bit range of computers.



AMTIX! Back

CPC

Our resident CPC historian Paul Davies looks back at the original July 86 Issue #9 of AMTIX magazine.



are only three robots. And they're not exactly trying to impersonate humans to infiltrate bases, or indeed go all incognito to try and kill the mother of the future leader of the human resistance. Maybe I'm reading too much

into it. This month's cover has nothing to do with The Terminator, of course; it's all to do with The Fifth Axis, which is the new game from

Ever since I saw *The Terminator*, I was convinced that machines were going to take over the world. And if this month's cover is anything to go by, then it seems they will go down the route that Skynet decided to as well - total destruction of the human race! Except, it's just one guy they have hold of here. And as far as we can see, there

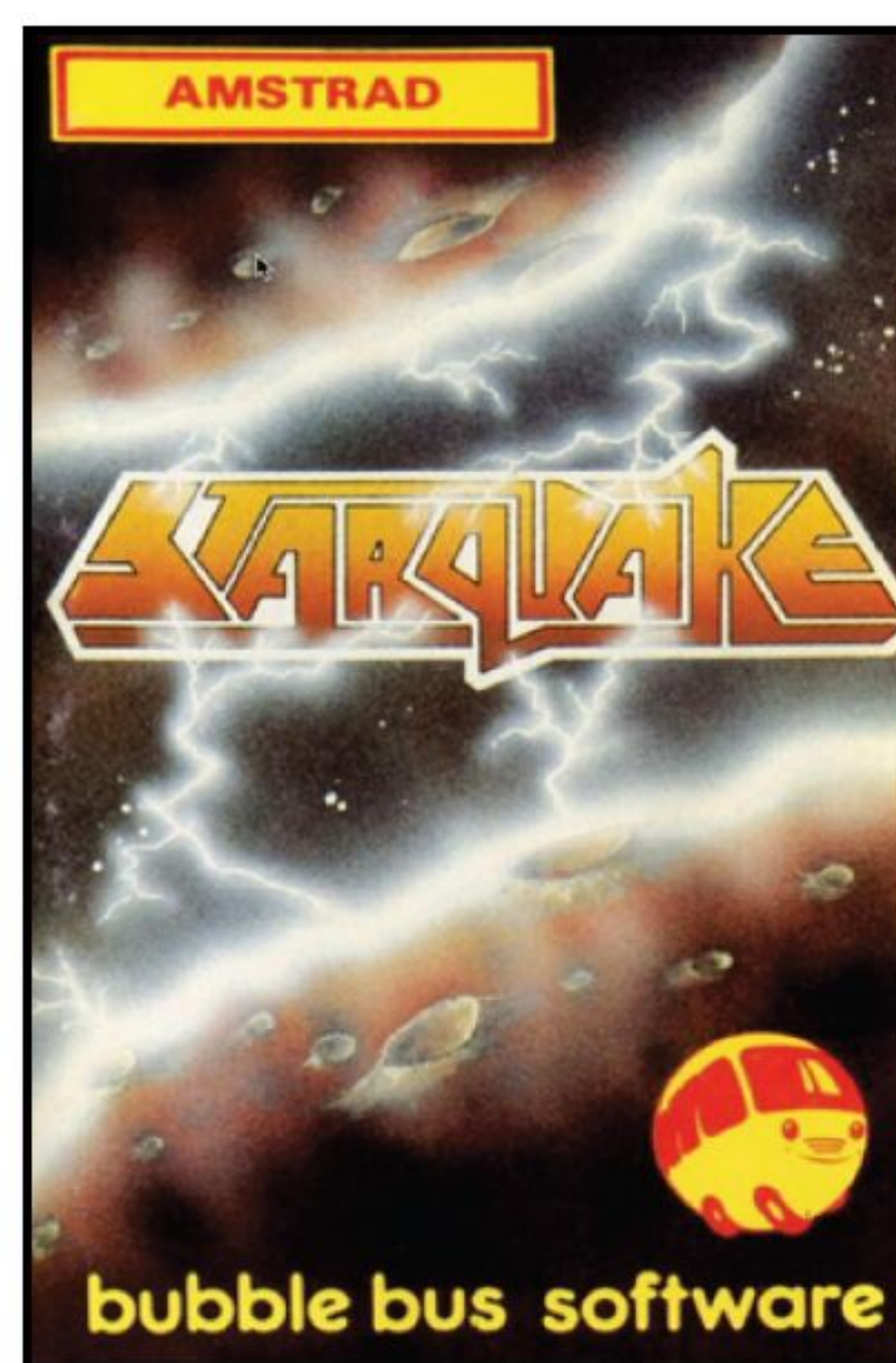


Activision. Amtix! state that it's a 'mighty arcade game' but not much else. I guess

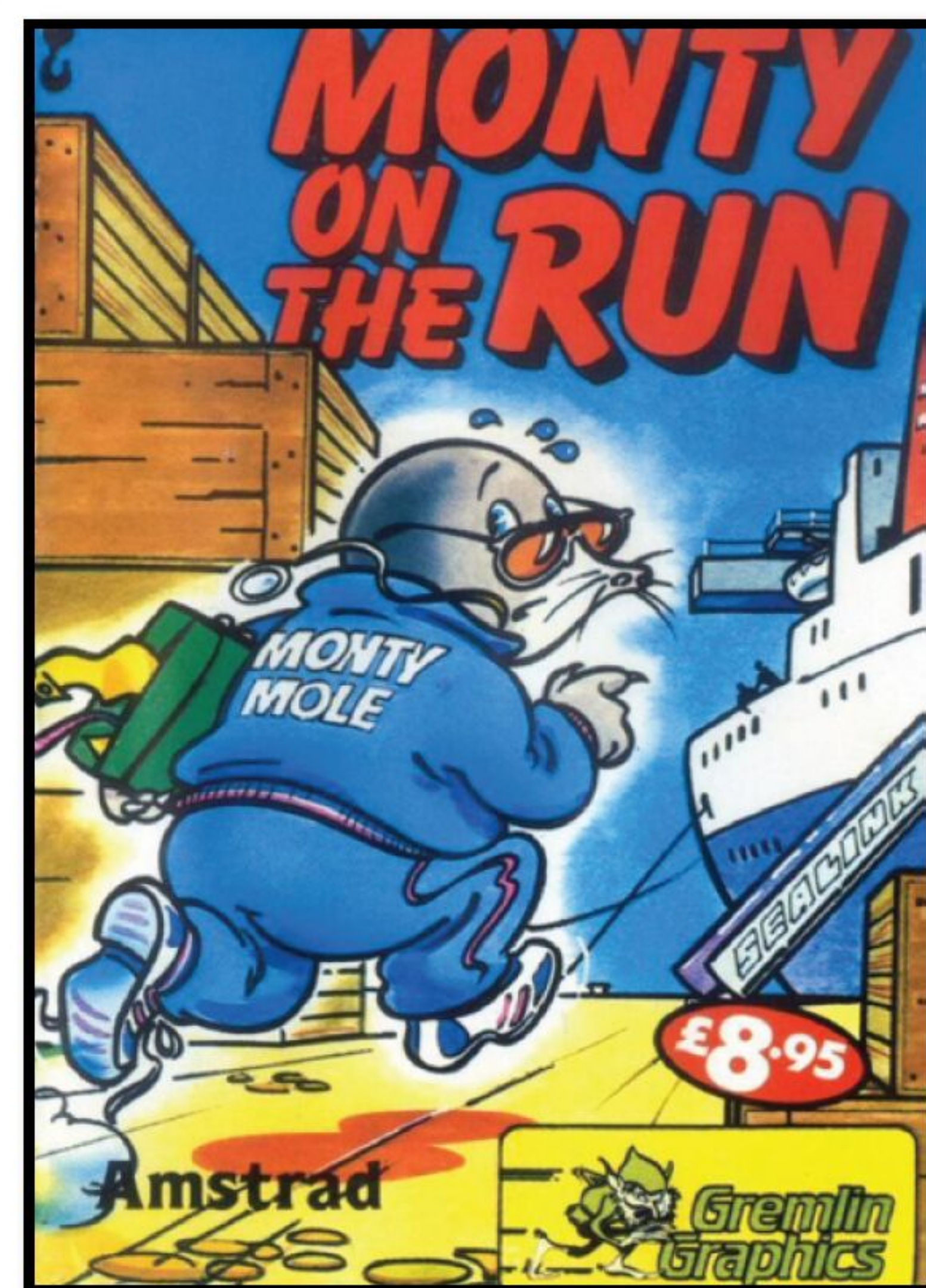
AMTIX Issue #9

we'll need to read on to get a bit more information about it.

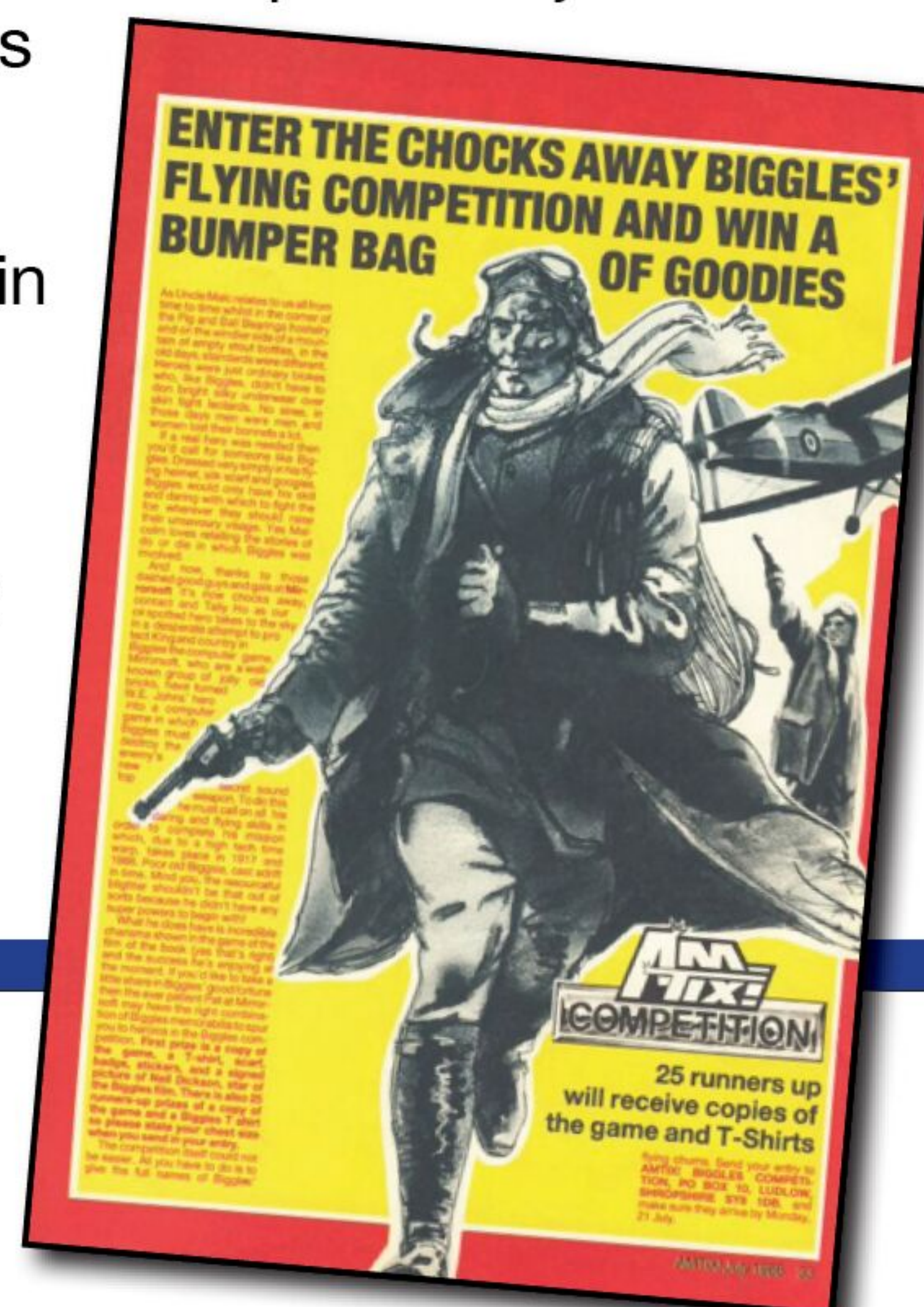
But, let's forget about *The Fifth Axis* for a bit - have you seen what else is reviewed in this issue? That's right, it's only *Starquake*,



isn't it? It'll be interesting to see if it's as epic on the Amstrad as it is on the Speccy. I mean, how could it not be epic? It's *Starquake*! Let's go straight there and see... no, let's do things the normal way, shall we? Let's see what else is in here before I get too excited and start rambling on and on about *Starquake*. It's hard, but I'll do it just



for you guys. Okay, well, elsewhere, *Monty On The Run* also gets a review, along with *Equinox*, *Tomahawk*, and *Swords and Sorcery*, most - if not all of which - started life on other formats but have now made their way across to the Amstrad side. Aside from reviews, there are competitions to win *Biggles*-related goodies, a practical joke kit from



Chocks Away!
It's competition
time with
Biggles!

CRL (very random!), and a day out for two with British Aerospace, courtesy of Mirrorsoft. A mixed bag of prizes indeed. There's also the usual regulars, and it's at one of those that we'll start...

News! Virgin Games announced that their *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future* game was almost ready, describing it as 'more of an

DAN DARE'S ALMOST READY

Virgin Games hope to have Dan Dare Pilot of the Future ready for release by August. They describe it as more of an arcade game than an adventure. There are over 100 screens to the game where our futuristic hero has to fight off the attentions of the nasty Treens.

arcade game than an adventure', with more than 100 screens. A game that was well-received on other formats, so the hope was that that reception would be replicated on the Amstrad. Another bit of randomness and also a 'fun fact' - did you know that most computer downtime is down to static? And if you did know this, do you in fact have a life? I joke, of course: it must be or have been a serious problem as Rochdale-based

company Integrity Solutions have deemed it serious enough to have developed the 'Static Buster'. Right. The system consists of a tiny unit with two leads, each with a pick-up head which attaches to an earth point. The unit acts like a static sponge, soaking up static charges from the device and diverting them safely to earth.' All your anti-static problems could be solved for the price of just £49.95. Or, you could just do what everyone else used to do, and rub your hand across the screen of your TV screen and listen to the crackle instead. And then touch a sibling in the hope they get a little shock. Or you can pay £49.95 to remove this pleasure from your life. You choose!

Staying with tech news, Cheetah Marketing, who were based in Cardiff (woo! Cardiff. MY home town!), was in the midst of producing a digital drum machine for the Amstrad range of computers. Named the *Amdrum*, it would convert the

CPC464, CPC664, and CPC128 into programmable digital drum systems. Using digital recordings of real drum sounds, it would provide users with a degree of realism that you'd normally only find on equipment that would cost thousands. Of pounds. But this little beauty would only cost £34.95. Bargain. Imagine going on Top of the Pops with your CPC464 on a desk, hammering out some beats while the crowd goes wild, basking at the majesty they see on stage, dancing to an... Amstrad home computer. I wonder if anyone ever did this?

That's enough news for this month - now, where's that *Starquake* review?

Aah, there it is. Glory be, it's just as beautiful on the Amstrad as it is on the Speccy. Aside from a slight variation of the colour scheme, it's just like looking at a Speccy screen. *Starquake* puts you in control of B.L.O.B., who's been given the job of stabilising an unnamed planet before it goes ka-boom! B.L.O.B. needs to navigate the rather large planet (the game comes in at around 500 screens), collecting



all the relevant items needed to take to the centre, or the core, of the planet before it's too late. There are a lot of

items that can be collected, many of which you may not necessarily need - to find out what you do need, you'll have to make your way to the planet's core,



which means only one thing - you need to get travelling. Travelling is undertaken in three different ways: walking, flying, or teleporting between the many transporters scattered around the land, and as usual, there are many hazards out there. Some alive, some spiky, and some quite electrifying, though all rather deadly, so you'd best be on your guard on your mission. The one forgiving thing about *Starquake* is that there are many extra lives to pick up, and you're never too far from an energy or firepower boost, though you do still have to be vigilant on your travels. I could talk *Starquake* all day, but I'd better stop or else this would turn into a *Starquake* special. It's good to report that the game gets a good review for the Amstrad, scoring an Amtix! Accolade with a score of 91% Beautiful stuff! Time to calm down now and look at something else.

And breathe.

So, here we are, the cover game is here - *The Fifth Axis*. How does it stack up? An Amtix! Accolade is a



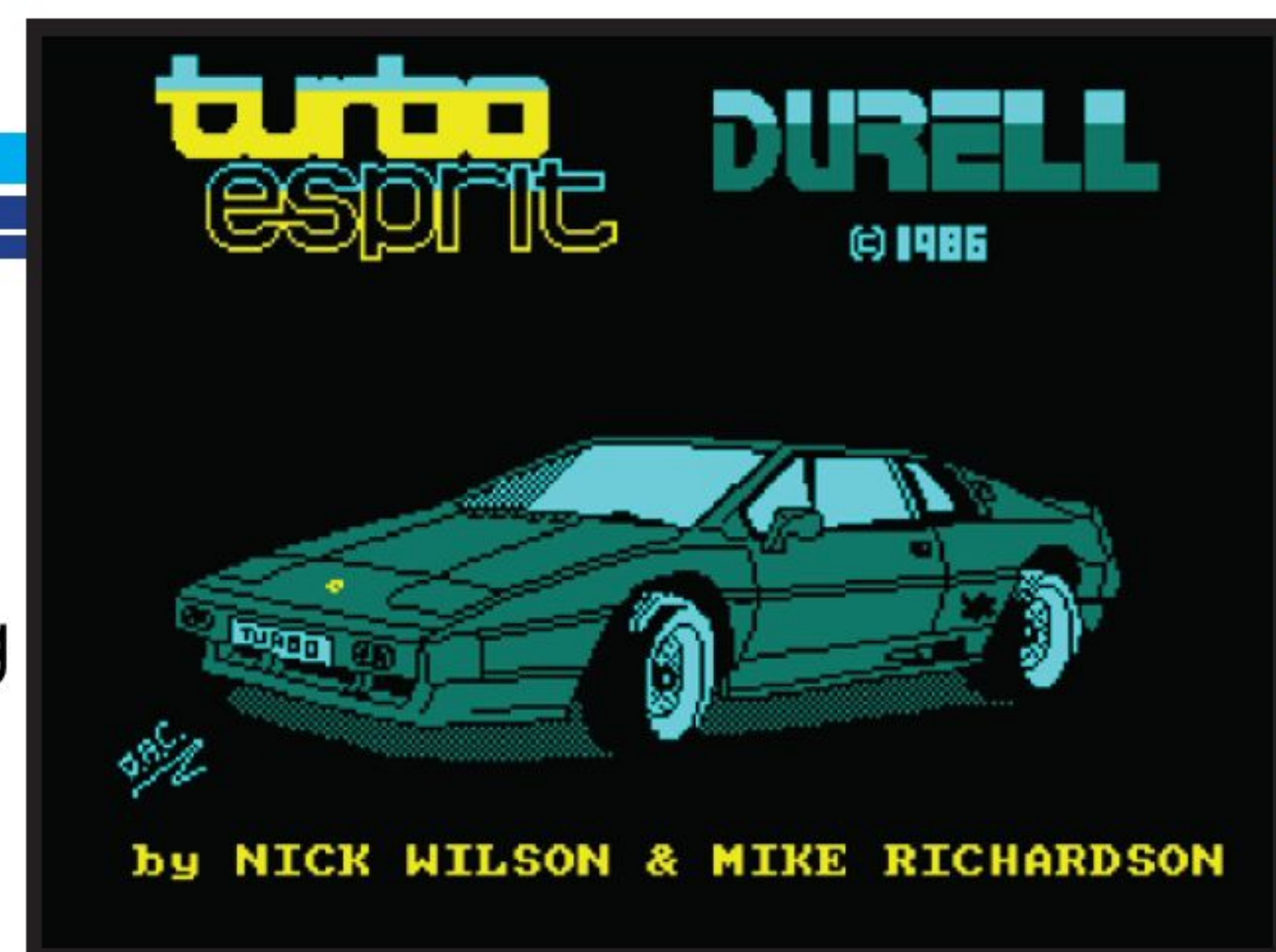
good sign and a good way to start a review as any, I guess. Professor Chronos (that guy out of *Venom*? No, that Cronos! Get back to the review, will you?) has peaked in terms of invention and pushing science to its limits by creating a machine that could move backwards and forwards through time (I guess you'd call that a time machine then, eh?), though as with all scientific breakthroughs, something bad has come out of the

back of it. His to-ing and fro-ing across time has inadvertently caused havoc with the fabric of time - standard. Now you must travel through time, returning all the artefacts that have now ended up in the Professor's lab, back to whence they came, taking on the many androids



and other enemies that stand in your way. Amtix! is full of praise for *The Fifth Axis* with its smooth animation and graphics, along with its quite lovely tune being top of the tree in terms of appeal. Oh, and gameplay, of course. This one

Take out the local drug gangs GTA 8-bit style with Durell's Turbo Esprit



goes head-to-head with *Starquake* with regard to score with an overall of 91%, so maybe this is one you should check out if you can.

A classic on the Spectrum, *Turbo Esprit* was yet another making its way to the Amstrad at around this time. Often cited as a precursor to *Grand Theft Auto*, *Turbo Esprit* was lauded for its real-life, alive cities with working traffic lights that had to be adhered to - by yourself and other road users - and also the infamous steering wheel that dominates the playing screen. Armed with said *Lotus Esprit*, it's up



to you to infiltrate a gang of drug traffickers by setting upon them on the

streets, taking them out by either rear-ending them with your very expensive car (which doesn't seem like a great idea- who's going to pay for the repairs?) or shooting them down with a machine gun. I know which I like the sound of more. Whilst *Turbo Esprit* gets a bit of love on the Amstrad

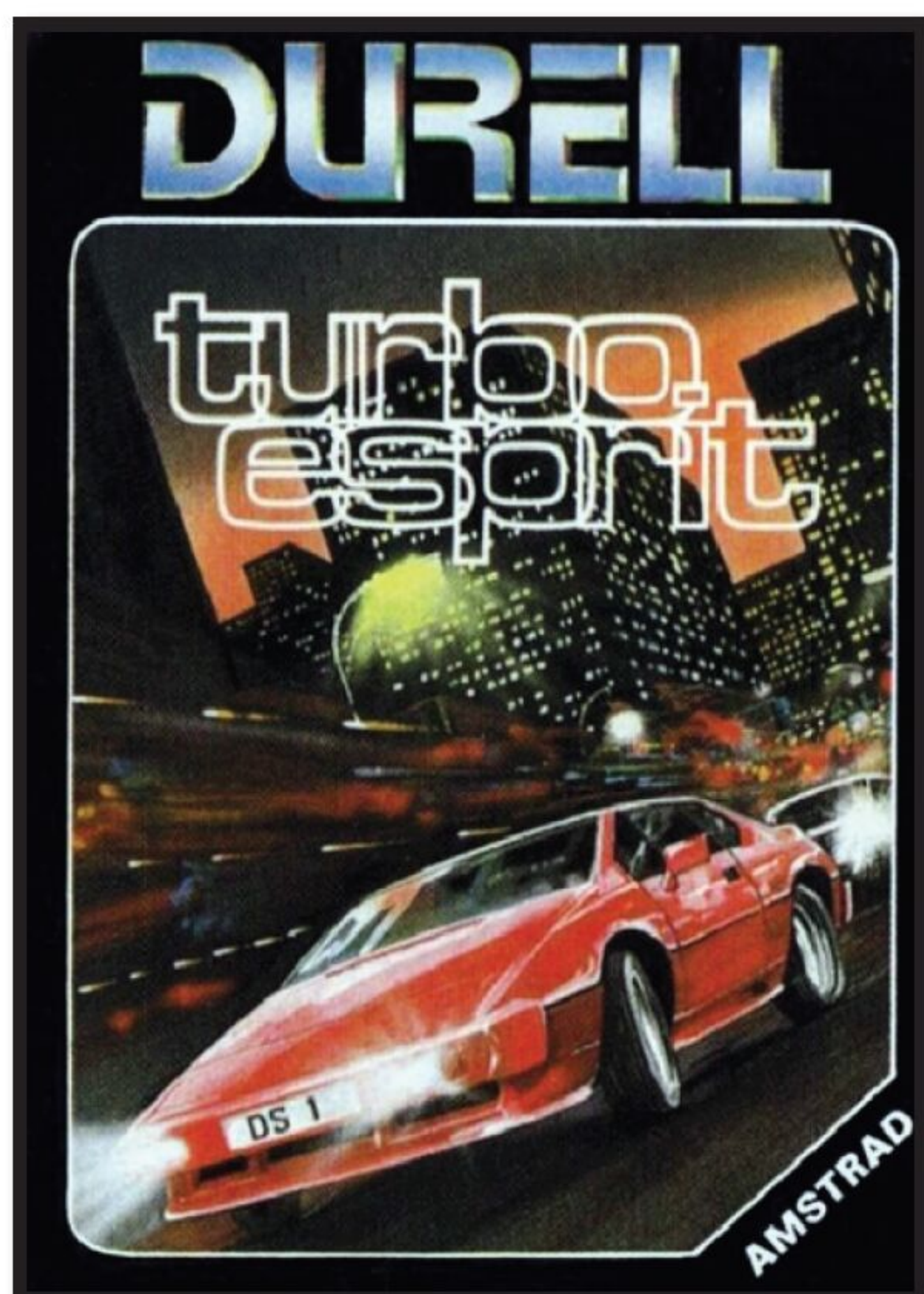
as it's a game that I remember my friend mentioning to me whenever we spoke about games. She used to have an Amstrad, and when the subject arose, she'd always exclaim 'The Last V8!', which I still haven't got around to playing (sorry, Beth!), but now maybe I won't have to

a car instead.' And so he did. This is not just any car though: this is a car that can withstand radiation - luckily - and has a turbo-charged eight-cylinder engine, 949 BHP, and can top 400kph. Now, that sounds like



radiation. The game is set with a top-down of your car and surrounding scenery, with a view of your steering wheel and control panel along the bottom, displaying messages and your speed. The Last V8 was another of those budget £2.99 games (good old Mastertronic), but we all know that even at that price, you could end up with a stinker... does this one fall into that category? Erm, how does 60% sound? Honestly, not great, but hey, maybe I'll give it a go. I'll do it for you, okay Beth?

Well, doesn't time fly when you're talking about nuclear fallouts? That's all for this issue, folks. Join me next time for more fun, frolics, and maybe another game about the end of civilisation. Who knows.



version, it does fall a little short in a few areas. Playability, graphics, and sound fall a little short for Amtix!'s expectant reviewers, though definitely one to have a go at, so they say. My favourite remark about the game? Value For Money - 75% 'Cheaper than the actual car.' Well, quite!

The next one jumps out at me a little



as I've found the Amtix! review of it? We'll see. Set in the year 2008 after a nuclear war - hmmm - it's been seven years since the world was plunged into darkness and despair. But, whilst everyone else concentrated on staying alive (aah, aah, aah, aah) and planning for the future when it was safe again to go overground, one scientist thought to himself, 'To hell with securing the future of all mankind on Earth - I'm going to build

a nice car. You take the car overground in the hope of finding other survivors, though whilst out on your travels, a message flashes up on your control panel advising you that an unexploded nuclear warhead is just minutes from becoming un-unexploded. *gulp* You must turn around and find your way back to where you come from and jump back inside your underground bunker before the sky turns a nice shade of

PREVIEWS

Previews by Colin Bell & Chris Weatherley



Back in 2019, when the world was slightly more sane, surprising and pleasing news dropped about Sega's iconic blue hedgehog making its way to the humble GX4000. A play-through of a 'beta' version of level one was previewed on the developers' YouTube channel. In fact, I did a comparison video on the first level of the conversion and the Game Gear and Master System ports, and it looked stunning! About time, too, as Sonic has recently done the rounds on all kinds of non-Sega platforms such as the SNES, NES,

C64, and even the Atari 2600! Fast forward to 2023, and we have a long-awaited update on the project. I'm pleased to report it is still going strong, with another demo level featuring a special stage, where Sonic is viewed from behind, racing down a track collecting rings,



which was inspired by the Mega Drive's *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* stage. The developer NoRecess has stated lots of hard work is



being put into the game, which will showcase a full-screen display, 52 colours on screen, and 50hz frame rate. Footage has been



seen running on real hardware also, and going by what we have seen so far, it not only looks spectacular, but it also sounds incredible, with oodles of *Sonic*-themed tunes and faithful SFX. Clearly based around the original 8-bit versions, and tailored to the console's limitations, but more importantly using the Plus hardware to its full potential, this is shaping up to be a very special game for the Amstrad platform. It will take time, however; NoRecess has said there is no need to rush the project, and it is taking longer than expected, so no release date has yet been announced. So the race is on now; what comes out first? *Sonic GX* or *Vespertino*? Personally, I'm hoping for a late 2024 release, but even that may be somewhat optimistic. Let's wait and see...

Bomb Jack remake in the works - improved graphics and arcade elements promised!



Do we really need yet another improved arcade remake on the CPC? Well, after seeing the new footage for the Bomb Jack remake by Anthony Flack, I think we may once more. Almost a complete overhaul of the original Elite software title, the game not only features the original arcade title

screen, but also improved animations, and arcade-like sprites of Mr. Jack himself and the on-screen enemies. Even the level graphics look more like the arcade version.

Anthony goes on to tell us - "I have always long thought that the Plus machine would be an excellent candidate for a

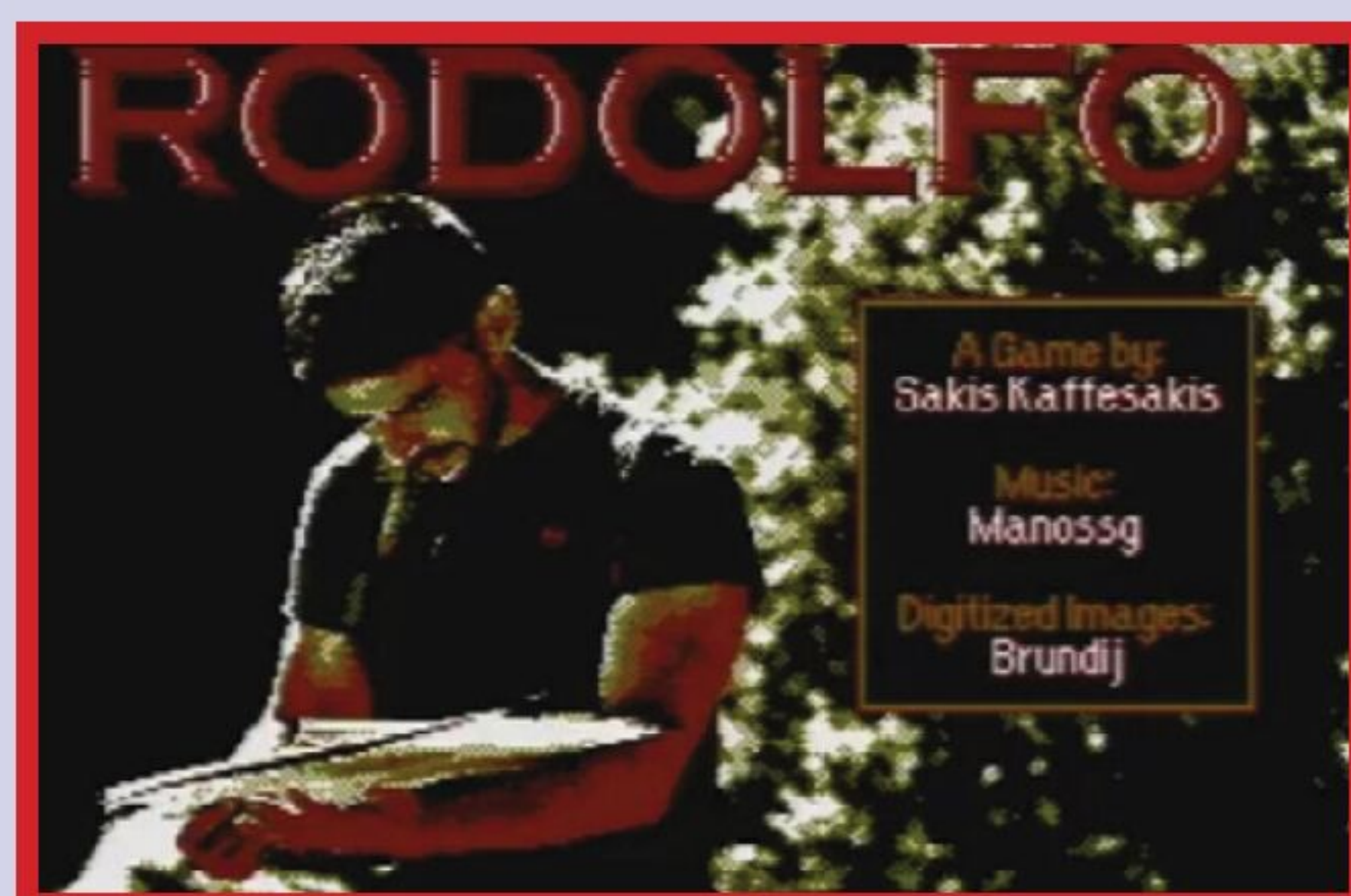
faithful port of Bomb Jack. The sprite specs seem almost made for it, and of course, the colours".

While the game looks promising, we've still to hear any music or sfx, but they are currently in the works. More on this remake as we get it.

New graphic adventure from Sakis Kaffesakis!

Our Greek adventure author, Sakis Kaffesakis, has been in touch to let us know about his upcoming new graphic text adventure, *Rodolfo Skylarriente*.

Set in 1980, the story follows Uruguayan Archaeologist Rodolfo Skylarriente, who is searching for the lost ring of King Hittite Suppiluliuma I. A rival archaeologist has hidden the ring somewhere, and



now it's up to you to follow the clues, find the ring, and return to the Museum of Hittite where it belongs.

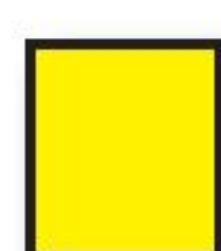
From what we've seen from the trailer, the game

features some stunning digitised photos, and uses a similar control format as Sakis's previous titles whereby you select commands via the numeric keys, in this case, Numbers 1-7.

The game will most likely be out by the time you read this, so we'll be sure to bring you a full review in the next issue.

AMTIX! CPC

Sign Off



And that, as they say, is that. Thanks for joining us once again as we delve into the modern-day and past world of the Amstrad CPC. Next issue, we reach the double figure mark and, of course, it's that time of year again. You know what I'm talking about - the 2023 #CPCRetroDev contest. Were all very much giddy with anticipation and excitement here at AMTIXCPC Towers, as we can't wait to get our mitts on this year's entries. I'm quite sure we'll be thoroughly entertained and that the

contest will produce many excellent and exceptional titles. Fancy contributing a re-



Calling all budding reviewers & writers!

view or feature to AMTIXCPC? Well, now is your chance! We're currently looking for new team members to join us here at AMTIXCPC Towers, so if you're 'Ready', drop us an email at: amtixcpc@gmail.com. Also, please keep spreading the word, as it's only through your support that we can keep this great CPC magazine going.

Well, that's about it from yours truly. I'm off to play some more Jax the Dog and get to grips with the new CPC graphic adventure by our Greek friend and author Sakis Kaffesakis. More on that one next issue.

Until then, enjoy what remains of the summer. and we'll see you all soon for Issue #10!

Colin Bell



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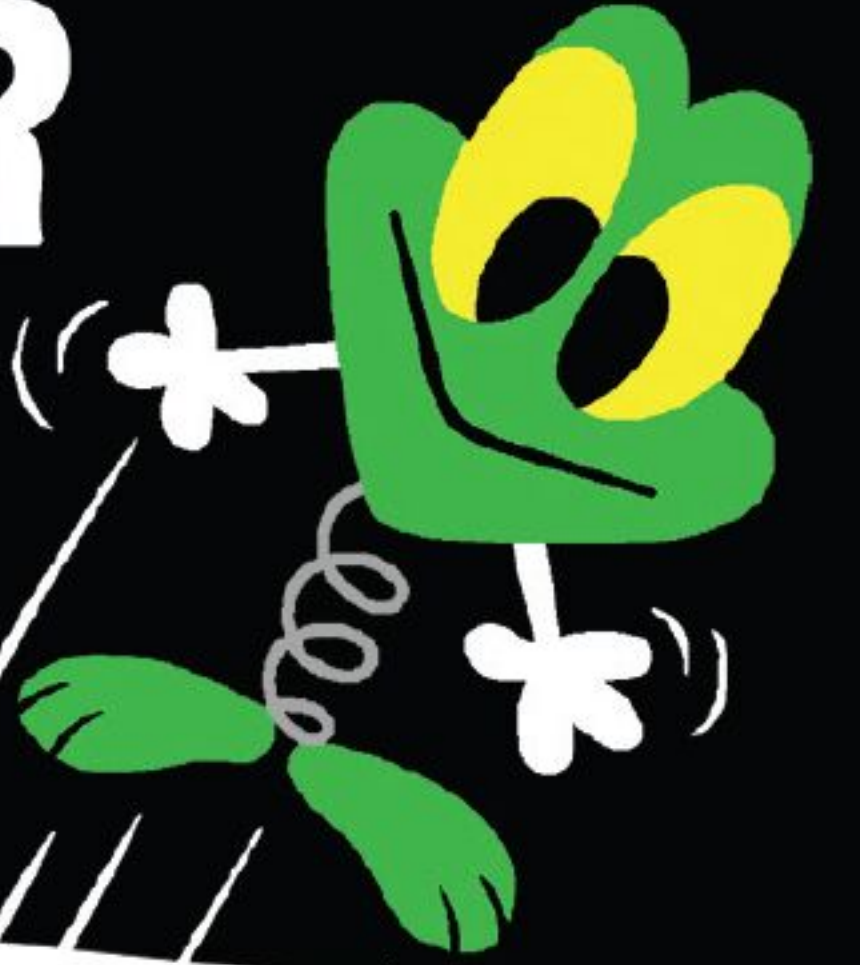
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